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July 2012

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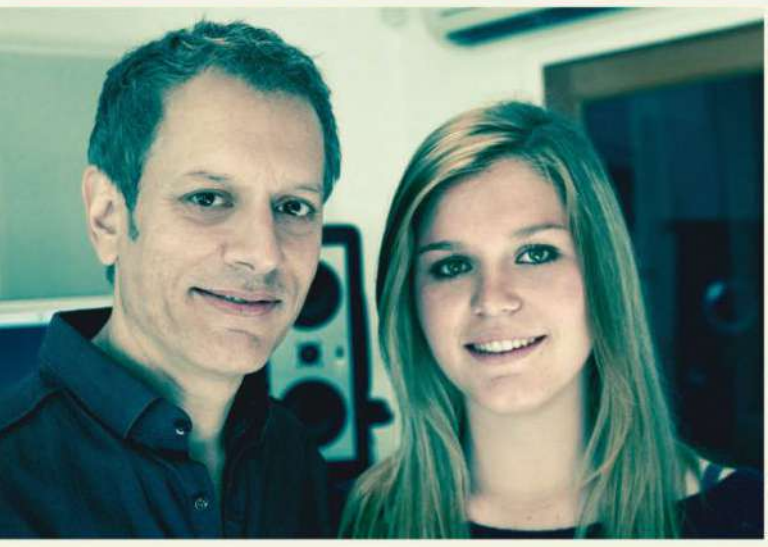

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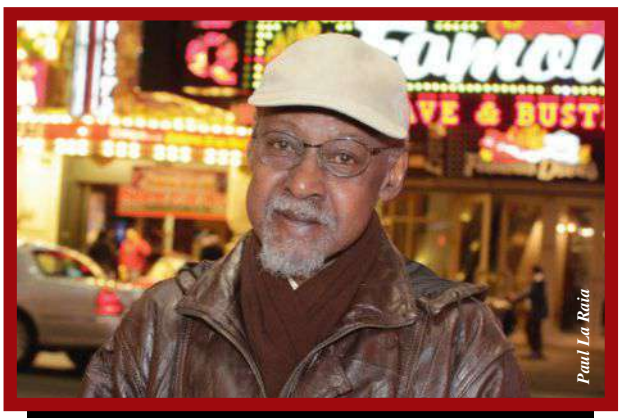
There's *so* much drumming talent today, across so many different styles, that it's a miracle *MD* readers are able to choose favorites. But choose you did, and once again we're excited and honored to share those picks.



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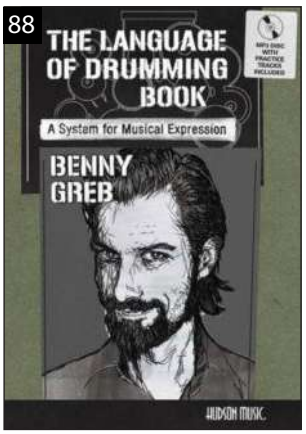

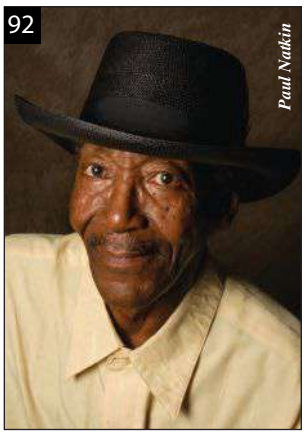

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You Never Know…

It's funny where life as a musician can take you. Six years ago, I visited NYC session drummer Shawn Pelton at his Manhattan home studio for a Woodshed feature. I expected to come out of that experience mesmerized by his super-cool setup yet completely frustrated over what it would take for me to be able to achieve something similar in my own home. What I discovered was the exact opposite. All I'd need to start cranking out my own recordings was a nice laptop, a multi-channel interface, and some decent mics. (That's all Shawn had at the time, and his stuff sounded great!) So I made the investment and quickly got to work to see what I could produce.

Fast-forward to the spring of 2012, after hundreds of hours spent researching and experimenting with mic placement, drum tuning, drum software plug-ins, and so on, and here I am putting the finishing touches on a full-length album featuring live drums, bass, guitar, and baritone saxophone, all of which was recorded by me in *my* studio. And you know what's the real kicker? I didn't play a single note! Somewhere along the way, I went from being a drummer with a hobby studio to being hired to engineer and tech my musician friends' projects. I've also done a few dozen drum tracks for other artists, and I'm slowly putting together compositions for a solo album that may or may not see the light of day. (Whether it actually does or not doesn't matter; I'm having a ton of fun entertaining my muse either way.)

Am I getting million-dollar sounds out of my ramen-noodle-budget studio? And am I getting calls to produce, engineer, or play on Warner Bros.' next big hit? Of course not. But what I've realized is that instead of constantly apologizing for what I *don't* have and what I *haven't* achieved, I've learned to embrace whatever life offers up and make the most of it. It's not about owning the best gear or having a perfectly tuned room and using the most expensive microphones. Rather, it's more important to develop the confidence to know what results you want to achieve and to have the focus and determination to make it happen to the best of your abilities—with no excuses.

There's a thread of similar sentiment running through this issue, from the bold, genre-blending style of Stephen Perkins (this month's Influences feature) to the fearless, aggressive approaches of cover artist Matt Halpern and up-and-comer John Sherman (Portraits). You'll also discover practical tips on how your overall attitude plays a major role in your success, in this month's Woodshed feature with online educator Mike Johnston and in the third installment of Nashville-based studio/touring drummer Rich Redmond's motivational "CRASH Course" series. We hope you find something valuable in these stories that helps push you further along on your own individual path.

We're also excited to reveal this year's Readers Poll results. Check out the winners on page 18. We want to say thanks to everyone who participated—it was another year of record-breaking entries—and to congratulate everyone who placed. Enjoy the issue!

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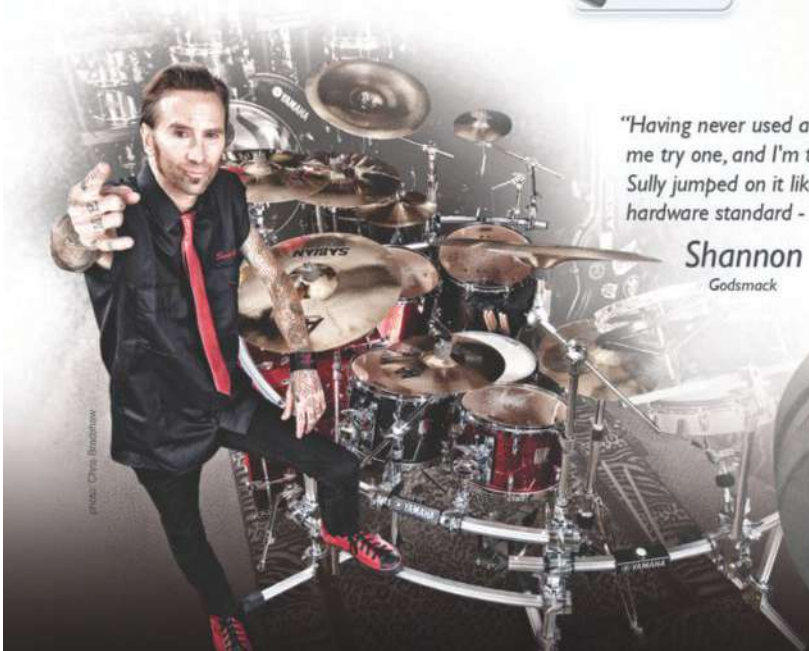

photo: Chris Bradshaw

"Having never used a rack in 30 years of touring, it took the gnarly HexRackII to make me try one, and I'm totally loving it! The real clincher for me was the strength: my singer Sully jumped on it like a monkey and nothing moved! This lives up to the Yamaha hardware standard - tough and innovative."

Shannon Larkin
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DANNY SERAPHINE

I just opened the April 2012 issue of *Modern Drummer* to find two articles about the original Chicago drummer (and my personal favorite), Danny Seraphine. In Ask a Pro, Gregg Bissonette discusses the album *Chicago V* and how Danny's playing has been one of his hugest influences. In the new Get the Best department, Ilya Stemkovsky features the compilation album *The Very Best of Chicago: Only the Beginning*. Chicago was everywhere in the late '60s and '70s. Their music was exceptional, melding rock with the jazz and big band harmonies of the generation before. Danny's creative drumming on those early albums provided a textbook for the rock drummer.

Like Gregg, I would set up my kit next to the stereo and play along to their records. To this day I wonder what inspired Danny to imagine licks like the catchy intro to "Saturday in the Park" or the timeless break from "Make Me Smile"—perfection! I finally got to meet Danny last November at the Montreal Drum Festival. It's great to see him back in the spotlight. Each year I look for Danny's name in the *MD* Readers Poll nominations; I can't imagine any drummer more deserving to be in the Hall of Fame. Maybe next year! Thanks for reminding your readers of this incredible drummer and groundbreaking band. I'm off to the kit to play along with Danny to *Chicago V*, one more time!

Ted Lane

THE OFFICIAL 26 POLYRHYTHM RUDIMENTS

I just saw the April 2012 issue, and wow, in the upper left-hand corner: "The Official 26 Polyrhythm Rudiments"! You know it took brave guys to make this (rudimental) statement an "official" reality. And now it is for all to see. As a side note (for myself and all who feel the same), this hopefully puts an asterisk on the traditional twenty-six drum rudiments as being the benchmark for all drummers in all genres.

Also, what an issue to be in—lots of cool stuff, including my northern California drumming peer George Marsh, and my student Mike Johnston enjoying a full-page ad, plus everything else going on in the April *MD*. Thank you! It means a lot to this career.

Peter Magadini

HEALTH & SCIENCE

As a drummer and certified personal trainer, I appreciated Shirazette Tinnin's article on self-myofascial release (SMR) in the September 2011 issue. However, I feel that a few additional points should be made for the purpose of clarification. It should be understood that the fascia is the connective tissue that surrounds and protects the muscles, bones, and joints in the body. In addition to releasing trigger points and reducing accumulative scar tissue within the muscles and fascia, SMR can help to alleviate chronic pain and increase blood flow to the treated areas, which aids in healing injuries and repairing microscopic trauma and tears within the fascia. The technique can also help to correct certain postural deviations, which many of us suffer from as a result of improperly slouching on a drum throne for much of our lives.

It should also be pointed out that, when encountering a tender spot, the participant should reduce the range of foam rolling to a few inches and concentrate on working that area for a short period, until the pain encountered there begins to diminish. Those new to SMR will likely find it a bit awkward and uncomfortable at first, and miraculous results should not be expected overnight. But if they stick with it, they will find the benefits in decreased muscle tension and improved biomechanics, both essential concepts in improving one's drumming.

Gary D. Gochenour

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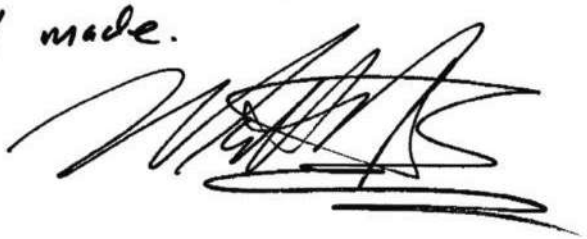

Matt Halpern
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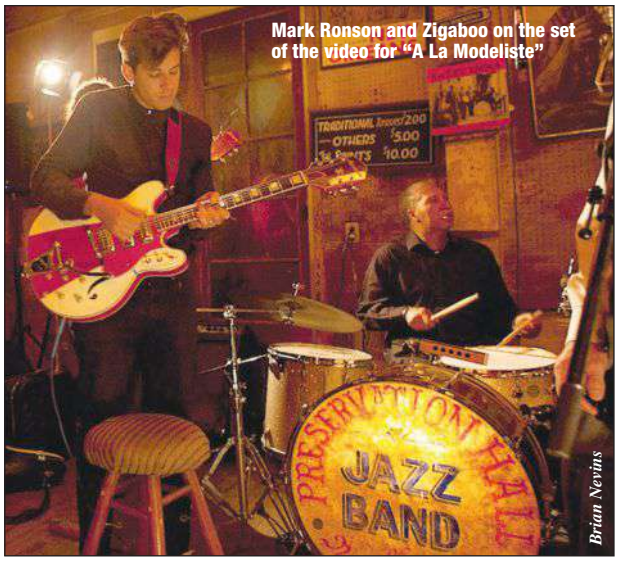
ZIGABOO MODELISTE

A new multigenerational project shines a light on the Meters' legendary groover.



Mark Ronson and Zigaboo on the set of the video for "A La Modeliste"
Brian Nevins

"As human beings, we all want to be loved and admired by our peers and our families," explains the King of the Funky Drums, Joseph "Zigaboo" Modeliste, one of the most prolific musicians to ever come out of New Orleans. "So when [British musician, producer, and DJ] Mark Ronson told me he was going to name the song after me—'A La Modeliste'—I thought he was joking! I wasn't expecting that at all, but I was happy to be part of this wonderful project."

The project that the legendary Meters drummer speaks of is Re:Generation, a documentary created by GreenLight Media in association with the Grammys that follows five of today's top DJ/producers—Ronson, DJ Premier, the Crystal Method, Pretty Lights, and Skrillex—and challenges them to collaborate with a historically significant musical artist. When Ronson, a 2008 Grammy Award winner, was picked to work within the genre of jazz, he didn't hesitate to contact Modeliste. The seeds of their partnership were sown earlier, at Ronson's wedding in France, when Zig said to the newly married groom, "If you ever need anything, please don't hesitate to ask." That's when Ronson told Zig about the upcoming project and asked if he'd be involved.

A few weeks later, the drummer was headed to New Orleans—he now lives in the Bay Area—to rehearse and record with Ronson, the Dap-Kings, Trombone Shorty, Erykah Badu, and Mos Def. "When it came to the music," Modeliste explains, "I didn't have anything to listen to in advance to let me know what the song was going to be like." Ronson had sampled one of Zig's legendary second-line grooves off an old record as a template for the track before Modeliste even arrived at the session.

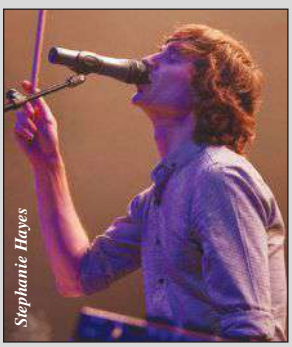
The musicians had only three days to get to know each other and create the song, which would be performed at Preservation Hall in New Orleans' historic French Quarter. "Mark put me in a comfort zone," Zig says, "and I was just concerned with doing a good job. I enjoyed it very much. I felt like an apprentice, learning all the music on the spot."

To watch the results of this collaboration, go to the Recent Videos page at moderndrummer.com.

"Pistol" Pete Kaufmann

GOTYE

Damn the pigeonholing: This drummer, songwriter, and sampling artist defies comparisons. May Update subject **Sarah Tomek** catches up with the hotter-than-hot multi-threat musician.


Stephanie Hayes

Playing on and producing nearly all of his third release, *Making Mirrors*, the internationally acclaimed artist Gotye (pronounced "GO-tee-yay") flirts with Motown, indie, electropop, and experimental rock, with an original flair. The combination has led to great success, first in Gotye's home country of Australia and then in Europe. This year, with a sold-out U.S. tour spurred by the hit "Somebody That I Used to Know," Gotye's diverse and highly musical productions seem poised to conquer the States as well. Tellingly, the multifaceted artist attributes his sense of rhythm and melody to his being a drummer at heart.

Belgian-born Wouter De Backer (he moved to Australia at a young age) displayed an early interest in music, nagging his parents for a kit at fourteen years old. Inspired by Stewart Copeland's feel and Buddy Rich's intensity, he spent his formative years in local rock bands. He didn't entertain the idea of singing or fronting an act until bassist Lucas Taranto left the band for music school. The group's disintegration was the perfect opportunity for moving to center stage, and Gotye—a variation on the French translation of his given name—was born.

Today the thirty-one-year-old musician feels he is "still an inspired and practicing drummer trying to find his own voice on the instrument," but also admits that he's not as "gig fit" as he once was. No one else would come to that conclusion, however, after watching Gotye behind his setup of three toms, a snare, cymbals, various percussive gadgets, and pads. Rhythmic brilliance runs rampant throughout his live show, in songs like "Learnalilgivinanlovin," Gotye's vehicle for showcasing his soloing chops, and "Smoke and Mirrors," where band members put down their main instruments, grab various percussion pieces, and trade rhythms with kit drummer Michael Anderson. "It's important to keep musical communication and interaction as part of the show," Gotye tells *MD*. "It's a primal thing when people play drums."

If Gotye defines anything, it's diversity. "Listen closely to drums in other genres of music," the artist advises, "and always attempt to experiment on other instruments. The way it feeds back on the ideas you bring to the kit is how you keep it fresh."

For a glimpse of Gotye's working style, go to the Recent Videos page at moderndrummer.com. And to read about Sarah Tomek's career, see the May 2012 issue of MD.

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DEANTONI PARKS

You want physical drumming? The current Mars Volta man is all about it.

The Mars Volta has seen more drummers than an old bass drum has gone through heads. From early kit keepers Jon Theodore and Blake Fleming to more recent recruits Thomas Pridgen and Dave Elitch, the band has certainly found some technically incredible drummers to play its muscular, exhilarating psy-rock.

Latest addition Deantoni Parks is, hopefully, on a more enduring path to Volta success. A contributor to TMV guitarist Omar Rodríguez-López's many solo projects, he was also under consideration before Pridgen took the chair. Parks's work on the Mars Volta's new one, *Noctourniquet*, is some of the most natural and relaxed drumming to grace the band's many CDs.

"They wanted to switch it up to more of a raw sound," Parks says, "and that meant a more 'see through' path for each part. It's like letting people see *inside* a little more. That goes perfectly with my style." Parks's drumming, particularly on "The Whip Hand," "The Malkin Jewel," and "In Absentia," is a study in evenness, hard groove, and flexibility.

"The band did some postproduction, like reversed parts and such," Deantoni goes on. "Most of the time the drum sound is a hybrid. There's one track where they reversed my drums and actually played the forward and reversed patterns at the same time—you can hear it. [That approach] doesn't happen that much on the record, but it's cool. Some parts are programmed; the songs do have that element."

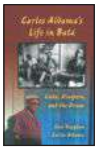
As the Mars Volta drum chair is very demanding, it's fitting that Parks, whose credits include John Cale, Meshell Ndegeocello, and the band KUDU (and its recent incarnation, Art World Killer), views drumming as a sport. His warm-up is thus dual-faceted. "Before a show I watch UFC fights," D explains. "I warm up with the fights, old school. I'll do eight and twelve strokes on each hand, on a pillow. And I do tons of stretching all day. I prep my body to do the things physically that I need it to do. I have the emotion, but I need something to stir it up physically. It gives me that extra fire when I hit the stage." **Ken Micallef**

OUT NOW

CDS

Wayne Krantz Howie 61 (Vinnie Colaiuta, Keith Carlock, Anton Fig, Charley Drayton, Nate Wood, Jeremy Stacey, Kenny Wollesen) /// **Shadows Fall** Fire From the Sky (Jason Bittner) /// **The Cult** Choice of Weapon (John Tempesta) /// **Garbage** Not Your Kind of People (Butch Vig) /// **Brian Jonestown Massacre** Aufheben (Constantine Karlis) /// **Cherri Bomb** This Is the End of Control (Nia Lovelis) /// **Silversun Pickups** Neck of the Woods (Christopher Guanlao) /// **Everyone Orchestra** Brooklyn Sessions (Jon Fishman)

BOOKS



Carlos Aldama's Life in Batá: Cuba, Diaspora, and the Drum by Umi Vaughan and Carlos Aldama /// **Drumming Up Vibrations** by Paul Francis

DVDS

The Strange Case of Alice Cooper: Live 1979, the Madhouse Rock Tour (Pentti Glan) /// **Hit So Hard: The Life & Near Death Story of Patty Schemel** (Patty Schemel, Alice de Buhr, Izzy, Debbi Peterson, Kate Schellenbach, Gina Schock, Dallas Taylor) /// **Sade** Bring Me Home: Live 2011 (Peter Lewinson)

ON TOUR

Zach Hill with Death Grips /// **Phil Selway and Clive Deamer** with Radiohead /// **Jamie Perkins** with the Pretty Reckless /// **Brian Dugan** with Candlelight Red /// **Scott Mercado** with Candlebox /// **Jared Champion** with Cage the Elephant /// **Jason Garner** with the Polyphonic Spree /// **Donald Barrett** with Colbie Caillat /// **Mike Bruno** with JT and the Clouds /// **Simon Kirke** with Bad Company /// **Jay Lane** with Primus /// **Dan Whitesides** with the Used /// **Matt Garstka** with Animals as Leaders /// **John Tempesta** with the Cult

NEWS

As we were in production for this issue, we learned of the passing of drumming legend **Levon Helm**. Stay tuned for *MD*'s tribute.

Alfred Music Publishing is celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of ***Alfred's Drum Method, Book 1***. The beginning snare drum tutorial, which was created by Dave Black and the late Sandy Feldstein, has sold more than 500,000 units worldwide. The instruction focuses on rudimental studies, roll studies, contest solos, and bass drum and cymbal technique and includes twenty-three solos suitable for recitals and contests.

WHO'S PLAYING WHAT

New Sabian artists include **Dave Briggs** (the Cab), **Adam Gray** (Texas in July), **Terrence Houston** (George Porter Jr., Dark Matter), **Dante "Taz" Roberson** (the Whispers, Cameo, *Night Calls*), and **Shirazette Tinnin** (the Shirazette Experiment, Tia Fuller Quartet).

Protection Racket has signed the following drummers to its family of endorsers: **Clem Burke** (Blondie), **Chris Fehn** (Slipknot), **Richard Jupp** (Elbow), **Dane Campbell** (Straight Lines), **Todd Demma** (Avril Lavigne), **Chris Bond** (Ben Howard), **Luke Harris** (Wretch 32), **Jesse Grant** (Devlin), and **Mike Pitman** (Xerath).

Ahead Armor Cases has announced the addition of **Adrian Young** (No Doubt), **Derrick Wright** (Adele, Toni Braxton), and **Richie Gajate Garcia** (Diana Ross) to its roster of endorsers.

Steve Smith (Vital Information), **Stephen Perkins** (Jane's Addiction), **Tony Braunagel** (Robert Cray), and **Richard Jenkins** (Anthony Hamilton) have joined the Cympad artist roster.

Jen Lowe (Ed Roland, Kevin Griffin, Ed Kowalczyk, Emerson Hart) has joined LP's artist roster.

Matt Garstka (Animals as Leaders) has joined Meinl's endorser list.

Jonathan Moffett
Rick Latham
Join
istanbul
Mehmet
Horacio El Negro Hernandez
the movement
Vinny Appice
we did
Robby Ameen
we're serious
Carmine Appice
istanbul®
Mehmet Handmade Cymbals from Turkey
www.istanbulmehmet.com - info@istanbulmehmet.com - ussales@istanbulmehmet.com

Back Through the Stack

BRAD WILK

In April 2003, the drummer had recently joined his Rage Against the Machine bandmates Tom Morello and Tim Commerford in the new group Audioslave, with Soundgarden singer Chris Cornell. **We asked what the transition was like.**

In Rage Against the Machine, [vocalist] Zack de la Rocha rapped, and playing extremely percussive hip-hop-style beats sounds great over rap. But Chris says a lot without a lot of words, and there's a lot of space. Playing super-percussive stuff over that tends to sound cheesy to me. So I had to completely rethink my style of playing.

I put most of my creative energy into the stuff that's going on between the beats—the ghost notes that are more felt than heard. It gives more space to the music and works a lot better with Chris's vocal approach. It makes the grooves lean or swing one way or the other. That's what sets drummers apart from each other, I think.

At the time I was reading *Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse and books on Buddhism, which is all about simplifying—the whole less-is-more philosophy. So the parallels were right there in my face. It was about taking a step back and yielding to the song more than anything.

More Fixes

The April issue of *Modern Drummer* featured Benjamin Homola's Shop Talk piece "9 Household Fixes for Common Drumset Problems." We recently posted an open question to our Facebook friends asking them to suggest their own home remedies, and, unsurprisingly, we got lots of interesting suggestions. Here are a few.

Kirk Anderson tells us, "I once used my key ring to replace a broken connection between my bass drum spring and the beater. Still there to this day."

Regarding the common problem of snare drum lugs backing out or loosening, *MD* Education Team member Bill Bachman suggests, "Go to the hardware store and buy #12-24 stainless steel nuts. Thread them onto your rods, and then, once your snare is tuned to your liking, tighten the nuts down against the lugs. You can smash all day, and they never go anywhere. In fact, you can punch in to a recording long after the fact, and the drum will still sound exactly like it did the first time. If you want to change the tuning, loosen the lug with a drum key, and it will unlock the nut. You can keep a little wrench in your stick bag for this purpose. The solution allows the rim to flex down under a rimshot, and the nuts are dirt cheap. You can see these on the cover photo of my book *Stick Technique*, recently published by *Modern Drummer*. The main snare and 10" snare have all the lugs locked down."

And Boris Tomakić offers this tongue-in-cheek suggestion, which all of us can surely relate to: "I sold the drums right after the last song, so I didn't have to load them into the van."

GREGG'S BIG DOZEN

This month, *MD* 2012 Pro Panelist Gregg Bissonette shines a light on **the Police's Stewart Copeland**.

Stewart Copeland pioneered a lot of what's going on now. You talk to Taylor Hawkins or other popular rock drummers—Stewart absolutely changed the way drummers play.

I remember about eight years ago at a clinic in England wondering what I was going to play. Everyone was on the bill—Terry Bozzio, Thomas Lang, Marco Minnemann, Kenny Aronoff, Ed Thigpen, Jeff Hamilton…. I decided to spend a day writing out twenty or so thirty-second snippets of Police tunes, and I edited them all together with a buddy of mine and played this thing at my clinic. And Bill Bruford came up to me and said, "I haven't heard that many Police songs at one time." I don't know if he was that into Stewart Copeland, but it kind of made him go, "Wow, that guy really broke a lot of ground."

Then we were in São Paulo, Brazil, a few months ago, doing two nights with Ringo. The Beatles never played South America, and all the shows there sold out in like two minutes. A buddy of mine called and said, "Hey, Stewart Copeland's going to be down there while you are." I'd done this *Mission: Impossible III* track with him years ago, because he doesn't like to play on his own stuff that he produces. So I emailed him, and he told me he was in São Paulo playing with his drum ensemble. He had a night off, and he came to the show and we got to hang out. So I got a chance to sit in a room in between Stewart Copeland and Ringo. And I'm just going, "God, thank you for this moment!" But sitting there, I realized how similar these two guys had it, because they were both influential, style-changing drummers in bands with these legendary singer-songwriter guys—it was *heavy*.

NATAL
THE POWER & THE GLORY
THIN LIZZY
BRIAN DOWNEY
Thin Lizzy
"Natal make great drums with solid tone and fantastic quality. Everything you would expect from a top of the line kit. I love playing them out on the road with Lizzy and have been getting many compliments for the sound and the look of the kit. Thanks Natal!"
BRIAN TICHY
Whitesnake
"Whoa! Look out for Natal, they've got it right! They have paid attention to detail and have gone that extra mile to build drums, hardware and pedals that look great, sound awesome and are totally roadworthy."
NATAL

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MODERN DRUMMER 2012 READERS POLL Winners

There's *so* much drumming talent today, across so many different styles, that it's a miracle *MD* readers are able to choose favorites. But choose you did, and once again we're excited and honored to share those picks, **beginning with your recognition of a true drumming giant who may or may not share his percussive gifts ever again….**

HALL OF FAME

PHIL COLLINS

Phil Collins came to prominence in the mid-'70s as the drummer in the British band Genesis, which spearheaded a style of progressive rock that featured long, multi-part compositions, odd times, and dramatic shifts in dynamics, tempo, and mood. As new wave and punk ascended at the end of the decade, Genesis was among the few bands that deftly absorbed more modern sonic elements, and its popularity grew with each succeeding album. Collins simultaneously began an enormously successful solo career, beginning with the perennially popular air-drumming track "In the Air Tonight." Around this time Phil also indulged his acting skills in feature films and TV (a sideline he'd explored well before joining Genesis) and guested on a variety of top artists' recordings, making him one of the most recognizable entertainers on the planet. Sometimes lost in discussions about Collins, however, was his downright monstrous drumming prowess, defined not only by his ability to play very complex arrangements but also by his hugely soulful groove, unique tom sound, and innate understanding of pop songcraft. Though he decided to retire in 2011—injuries sustained to the vertebrae in his neck made playing painful, and he wanted to focus his energies on raising two young sons—Collins has remained in the public consciousness, recently releasing the *Going Back* CD, which features renditions of his favorite R&B songs, and the *Live in Montreux 2004* DVD.

PAST HALL OF FAME WINNERS

2011: Jim Chapin
2010: Hal Blaine
2009: Mitch Mitchell
2008: Ginger Baker
2007: Jack DeJohnette
2006: Charlie Watts
2005: Stewart Copeland
2004: Mike Portnoy
2003: Simon Phillips
2002: Steve Smith
2001: Dennis Chambers
2000: Dave Weckl
1999: Roy Haynes
1998: Ringo Starr
1997: Terry Bozzio
1996: Vinnie Colaiuta
1995: Elvin Jones
1994: Larrie Londin
1993: Jeff Porcaro
1992: Max Roach
1991: Art Blakey
1990: Bill Bruford
1989: Carl Palmer
1988: Joe Morello
1987: Billy Cobham
1986: Tony Williams
1985: Louie Bellson
1984: Steve Gadd
1983: Neil Peart
1982: Keith Moon
1981: John Bonham
1980: Buddy Rich
1979: Gene Krupa

MVP

MIKE MANGINI

As the central figure in one of the most talked-about drumming stories of the new millennium, Mike Mangini did the seemingly impossible by replacing the figurehead of the most visible modern progressive-rock band on the planet. Of course, Dream Theater's decision to turn the process of replacing recently exited drummer Mike Portnoy into a veritable online reality show didn't hurt Mangini's profile. But Mangini's almost absurdly futuristic drumming concepts and complete readiness for the challenge—not to mention his ability to transfix audience members back to the very last row—catapulted him to near mythic status among prog-rock fans. Mike's unbridled performances on Dream Theater's 2011 international tour and superhuman approach on his debut recording with the band, *A Dramatic Turn of Events*, truly made him the most valuable player on last year's drumming scene.

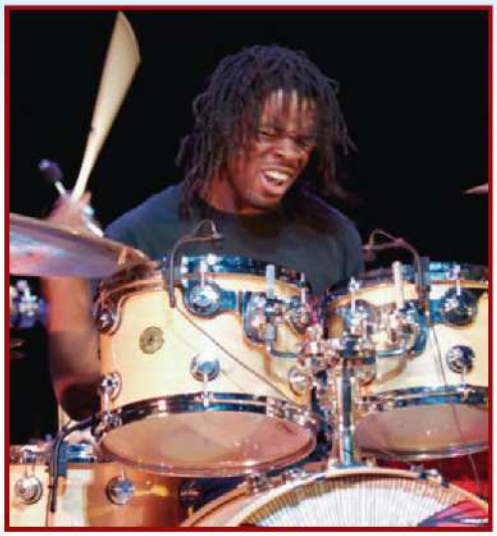
2. Vinnie Colaiuta • 3. Chad Smith • 4. Josh Freese • 5. Matt Chamberlain

MAINSTREAM ROCK

TAYLOR HAWKINS

It seemed obvious to most rock fans in 2011: It was *the* year of the Foo Fighters. Bandleader/singer/songwriter/drummer Dave Grohl (who, incidentally, topped this category last year) spearheaded one of the most buzz-worthy albums of the year in *Wasting Light*, and the Foos seemed to represent for many the proud glory of real rock 'n' roll in an era of increasingly automated beat making. In drumming terms, Taylor Hawkins' pure zeal and old-school charm were truly heroic—on record, in concert, and in two Grammy Awards performances.

2. Chad Smith • 3. Travis Barker
4. Jason Bonham • 5. Brian Tichy



ALTERNATIVE

THOMAS PRIDGEN

Thomas Pridgen left such an impression during his 2006-09 stint with the Mars Volta that his reputation for blistering, otherworldly drumming drama has nearly taken on a life of its own. Pridgen introduced a new band project, a three-piece called the Memorials, whose self-titled 2011 debut album featured Thomas's completely over-the-top, take-no-prisoners approach to shredding rock and soul.

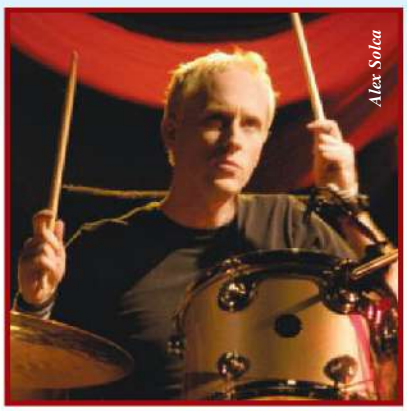
2. Brooks Wackerman • 3. Dale Crover
4. Glenn Kotche • 5. Jay Lane

POP

LARRY MULLEN JR.

U2's epic 360° world tour was another record breaker, and after nearly thirty uninterrupted years as one of the most consistently intriguing acts in the world, it's clear that the group's unstoppable rhythm section is at the heart of such enduring appeal.

2. Matt Flynn
3. Scott Underwood
4. Patrick Carney
5. Nate Morton



STUDIO

JOSH FREESE

The studio scene might not be what it used to be, but there's still room for the unshakable masters to make their mark. Last year—like most years—Josh Freese was busy making the most popular artists of the day sound great. Among his significant 2011 gigs: *Hard Times and Nursery Rhymes* by Social Distortion, *Goodbye Lullaby* by Avril Lavigne, *Ghost on the Canvas* by Glen Campbell, *Christmas* by Michael Bublé, *Stronger* by Kelly Clarkson, and *Memories of a Beautiful Disaster* by James Durbin.

2. Matt Chamberlain
3. John "JR" Robinson
4. Chad Cromwell • 5. Jay Bellerose

PROG

NEIL PEART

As the old joke goes, if an entry for *progressive rock drummer* were in the dictionary, it would be Peart's face that you'd see. Neil's a bona fide cultural touchstone, nearly forty years into his career—but somehow he seems more active than ever. Last year saw the Rush drummer/lyricist appear on *MD*'s December cover, release the book *Far and Away: A Prize Every Time*, participate in the legendary Canadian band's Time Machine tour, release the DVDs *Taking Center Stage* and *Fire on Ice: The Making of the Hockey Theme*, and anchor the first drum solo week on *Letterman*.

2. Mike Mangini • 3. Todd Sucherman
4. Marco Minnemann • 5. Carl Palmer

R&B

TONY ROYSTER JR.

With each passing year, the mention of Tony Royster Jr.'s introduction to the world in the '90s as a child drumming prodigy seems less and less pertinent. At this point Royster's professional résumé—which includes work with Japanese superstar Hikaru Utada, bass monster Francisco Fattoruso, and rap mogul Jay-Z—is compelling enough to explain why *Modern Drummer* readers singled Tony out this year among the world's top R&B drummers. Among his 2011 highlights were performing on the second drum solo week on *Letterman* and touring with Joe Jonas.

2. John Blackwell • 3. George "Spanky" McCurdy • 4. Chris Dave • 5. Gerald Heyward

JAZZ

JEFF HAMILTON

Small-group leader, keeper of the big band flame, irreplaceable rhythmic foil to the world's greatest vocalists…Jeff Hamilton is unique, compelling, and, above all, swinging. Hamilton detailed some of his recent musical accomplishments this past February in his first *MD* cover story.

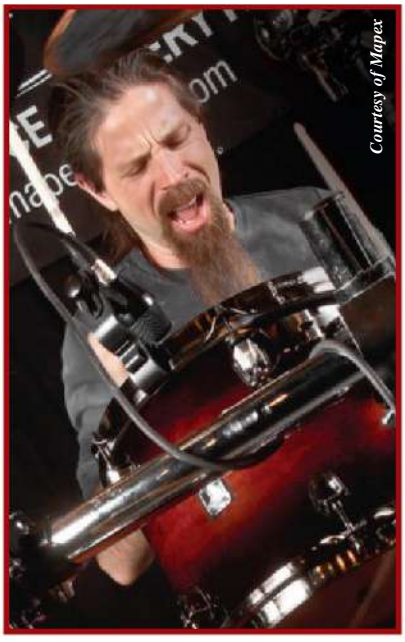
2. Jeff "Tain" Watts
3. Terri Lyne Carrington
4. Adam Cruz • 5. Jamire Williams

METAL

CHRIS ADLER

A new Lamb of God CD and tour, sold-out clinics, two instructional books (*Lamb of God: New American Gospel* and *Lamb of God: As the Palaces Burn*)…2011 certainly *was* a busy and successful year for the *MD* Pro Panelist, who's now taken the top metal spot two years in a row.

2. Matt Halpern
3. Charlie Benante
4. Jeremy Spencer
5. Brann Dailor



CLINICIAN/EDUCATOR

CHRIS ADLER

Anyone who's met or read about Chris Adler knows that he's constantly looking for ways to up his game, and it was in the spirit of helping other drummers improve their own playing that he launched a string of highly regarded clinics across the U.S. for Mapex. Given Adler's second win in our Readers Poll's metal category, it's no surprise that attendees were lining up for hours to witness these educational appearances.

2. Billy Ward • 3. Mike Johnston
4. John Riley • 5. Jim Riley

FUSION

STEVE SMITH

When you think about it, who better represents the concept of fusion—the blending of multiple disciplines into one distinctive and nuanced approach—than *MD* Hall of Famer Steve Smith? In 2011 the perennial favorite performed at the World's Greatest Drummer Concert, a tribute to Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Louie Bellson, and Joe Morello, and at the Guitar Center Drum-Off in Los Angeles (covering "Salt Peanuts" with Jeff Hamilton); played festivals with Vital Information; conducted clinics; appeared at Drum Fantasy Camp with Chris Coleman, Dave Weckl, Gavin Harrison, and Peter Erskine; toured with the Hiromi Trio; and, with the release of Journey's *Greatest Hits 2*, reminded the world of his faultless approach to arena rock.

2. Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez
3. Omar Hakim • 4. Lenny White
5. Mark Guiliana

PERCUSSIONIST

LUIS CONTE

This year makes it four in a row that Luis Conte has topped the percussionist category in the *MD* Readers Poll. Among Conte's recordings in 2011: the soundtracks to *Happy Feet Two* and *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*, Patti Austin's *Sound Advice*, *Journey Around the Sun* by Strunz & Farah, *Sundays in New York* by Trijntje Oosterhuis with the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, *Negociaré con la Pena* by Pepe Aguilar, and the percussionist's seventh release as a leader, *En Casa de Luis*. Conte also conducted a series of clinics and toured with the legendary singer-songwriter James Taylor.

2. Taku Hirano • 3. Pedrito Martinez
4. Richard Bravo • 5. Bashiri Johnson

COUNTRY

JIM RILEY

This makes it two years straight for Mr. Riley at the top of the country category. The Rascal Flatts drummer had yet another banner year, conducting a master class at MD Fest 2011, releasing the well-received instructional manual *Song Charting Made Easy*, appearing on *Surprise, Oprah! A Farewell Spectacular Part 1*—and, as usual, touring, touring, touring.

2. Chad Cromwell • 3. Rich Redmond
4. Chris McHugh • 5. Ben Sesar

UP & COMING

NAVENE KOPERWEIS

Though he's since left Animals as Leaders, Navene Koperweis captured the imagination of many drummers last year with his work with the progressive metal band. Koperweis's Portraits piece in the January issue of *Modern Drummer* explored advanced concepts of meshing acoustic and electronic drums.

2. Elaine Bradley (Neon Trees)
3. Eric Slick (Dr. Dog)
4. Jonathan Schang (District 97)
5. Chris St. Hilaire (The London Souls)

EDUCATIONAL BOOK

RUDIMENTAL JAZZ

BY JOE MORELLO

2. *The Breakbeat Bible* **by Mike Adamo**
3. *Song Charting Made Easy* **by Jim Riley**
4. *Systems: Book 1* **by Ari Hoenig**
5. *The Complete Guide to Brushes* **by Florian Alexandru-Zorn**

EDUCATIONAL DVD

TAKING CENTER STAGE

BY NEIL PEART

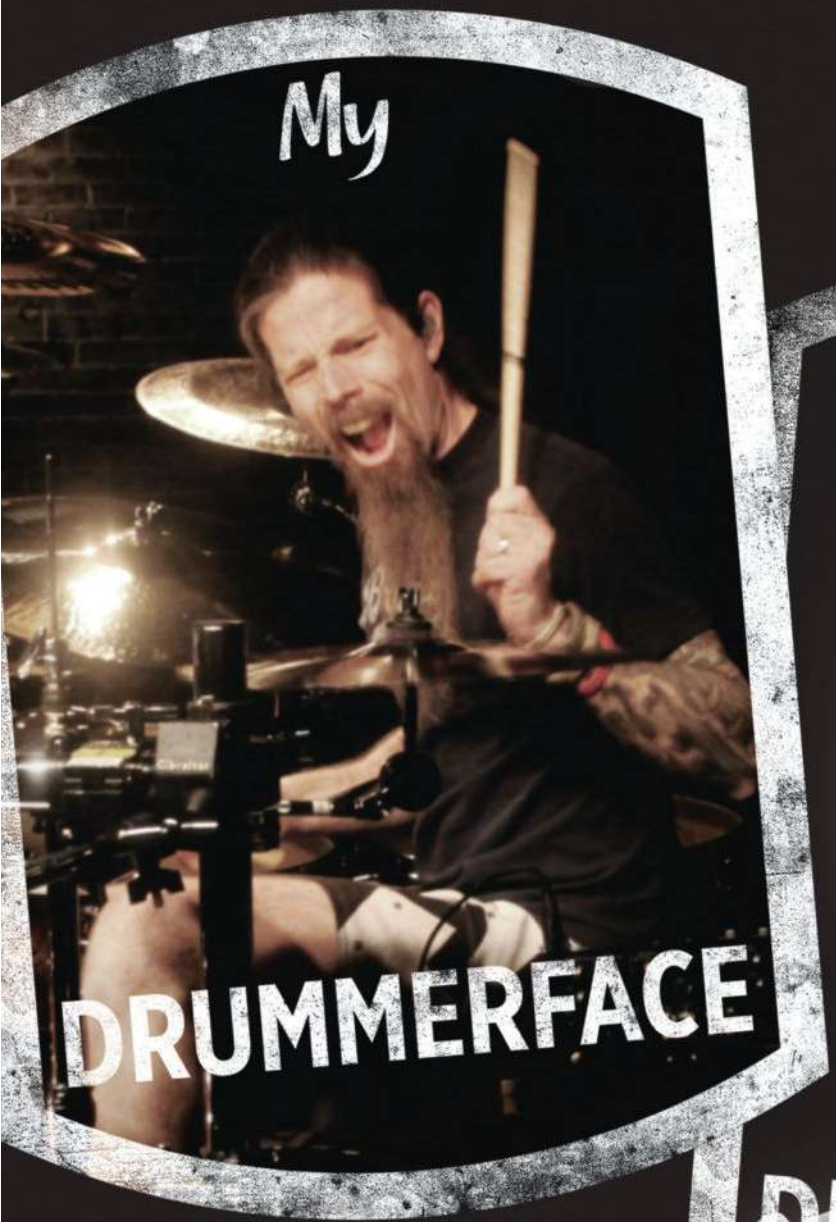
2. *Methods & Mechanics II* **by Todd Sucherman**
3. *Double Bass Drum Freedom* **by Virgil Donati**
4. *Life on Drums* **by Billy Martin**
5. *Wicked Beats* **by Gil Sharone**

RECORDED PERFORMANCE

MIKE MANGINI

A DRAMATIC TURN OF EVENTS (DREAM THEATER)

2. Taylor Hawkins, *Wasting Light* **(Foo Fighters)**
3. Steve Gadd, *Live at Voce* **(Steve Gadd & Friends)**
4. Brann Dailor, *The Hunter* **(Mastodon)**
5. Dale Crover and Coady Willis, *Sugar Daddy Live* **(the Melvins)**



CHRIS**ADLER**
Lamb of God

MATT**HALPERN**
Periphery

Chris & Matt,

We congratulate you guys
on your Reader's Poll Awards!

-Your friends at

MAPEX

TOM MICS

I'm currently putting together a studio in my house for recording drums. What are the best microphones for toms?
Robert

There are a lot of options for tom mics, and just about every manufacturer has models that would sound great. For years, the industry standard has been the Sennheiser MD421, which has a large-diaphragm dynamic element that can handle high sound-pressure levels. Sennheiser also makes a very rugged clip-on mic, the e604, that's designed especially for drums. In *MD*'s studio, we use Shure Beta 98AMP clip-on mics for rack toms and Shure KSM32s for floor toms. Shure Beta 27s are also very good, especially for larger drums, and you can even get nice tom tones from the basic Shure SM57. In addition, we've had excellent results using the Audix D2 in the studio, and the MXL Cube condenser is super-affordable and very clean sounding. You should also investigate options from AKG, Audio-Technica, and Beyerdynamic, among others.

MIND MATTERS | A 25-Hour Day?

by Bernie Schallehn

I'm a seventeen-year-old high school student, and I've been playing drums since I was eight. I play in my school drum line and orchestra, and I gig regularly in a couple different bands. I recently started working a part-time job, which leaves me with little free time to practice. How can I keep my skills sharp?
BDM

I applaud the full life you've made for yourself. But your letter also tells me that you may have packed your schedule a little *too* tight. The last thing you want is to experience burnout with an activity that gives you such pleasure and fulfillment, which in this case is drumming. Severe burnout could even lead you to abandon music completely. Here are some things to consider.

THE POWER OF NO

In the 1970s, there was a world-class session drummer working in New York City. In an interview, he spoke of how work was pouring in at an astounding rate—so much, in fact, that he was starting to burn out. He feared he'd soon be as crisp as an overcooked Pop-Tart. His first strategy was to leave the studio scene for a few days and hide out in the clubs at night. When he came back to the studio, however, messages requesting sessions had piled up. (Remember, there were no cell phones back then.) This super-busy drummer hadn't escaped anything; he'd just delayed dealing with reality. Eventually he started to turn down some sessions in a polite but definitive way. Sure, some artists were upset, and he lost a few gigs, but he had to think of himself. If he burned out, he and others would lose out big time. As he continued to say no, his days became more manageable. He had to become a bit more selfish.

You might be thinking, *Selfish? Isn't that a bad trait to have? Shouldn't we always be giving to our fellow man?* Well, I'm going to suggest an alternate definition of selfish.

Think of selfish as taking care of yourself, attending to your needs, and going after what you want. Behaving selfishly in this context is engaging in necessary "me" time. This doesn't mean you become a narcissist, calculating behaviors that will *only* benefit you. It's a question of finding a balance.

Reliability, trustworthiness, competence, and friendliness are positive aspects of your character that others saw when they bestowed so many responsibilities on you. Own those traits, and be proud that you possess that type of personality. Sadly, though, individuals like you can become like overloaded pack animals, continually being saddled with backbreaking obligations that keep you from engaging in your true passions.

In your case, you're struggling to find time to get behind your drumkit for some solo practice. We all get only twenty-four hours in the day. Learn to say no in a polite but authoritative manner if you're asked to take on a responsibility that you don't want or have time for. Brace yourself, because the person asking may become upset. Learn to deal with that, and stick tight to your decision.

JETTISON THE EXCESS WEIGHT

Sometimes weights have to be tossed out of the basket of a hot-air balloon before the balloon will climb to amazing heights. What can you let go of in your life to make more time for solo drum practice?

Your letter lists a wealth of activities in which you're involved. In a year or two, you'll be out of high school and working toward a career. Good questions to ask yourself now are: Where do I want to be in five years? Ten years? Twenty years? Look at your present-day life. Anything that doesn't fit with your goals might have to be tossed out of the basket of your hot-air balloon. Sometimes it's the little five-pound weight, but other times it's the bigger twenty-five-pounder. It's simple to get rid of things, but it's not always easy, because it may involve dealing with negative reactions and feelings from others.

STOLEN MOMENTS

Even in such an action-packed life as yours, I guarantee you can find some spare minutes to practice. I suggest that you always carry a pair of sticks and a small practice pad in your backpack. Bust them out and work on your rudiments while waiting for class to start. Do you get breaks at your part-time job? If so, "par-a-did-dle, par-a-did-dle."

Acoustic drums are loud. I'm guessing your folks have a cutoff hour for any nighttime practicing. But you can also purchase an electronic kit. I bought an entry-level set a few years ago for less than $500. Can't afford new? Buy used. With an electronic kit, you can steal more practice moments later in the evening. Also, set your alarm clock for half an hour earlier than normal so that in the morning you can groove on the e-kit or work on your chops on a practice pad. With your bedroom door closed, others in the house should hear only a light tapping of the sticks. If the tapping is bothersome to someone else, set up your electronic kit or pad in the basement or attic.

With your drive and ambition, you'll do well in life. Best of luck!

Bernie Schallehn has been a drummer and percussionist for over forty-five years. He holds a master's degree in counseling psychology and, while in private practice, held the credentials of a certified clinical mental health counselor and a certified alcohol and substance abuse counselor.

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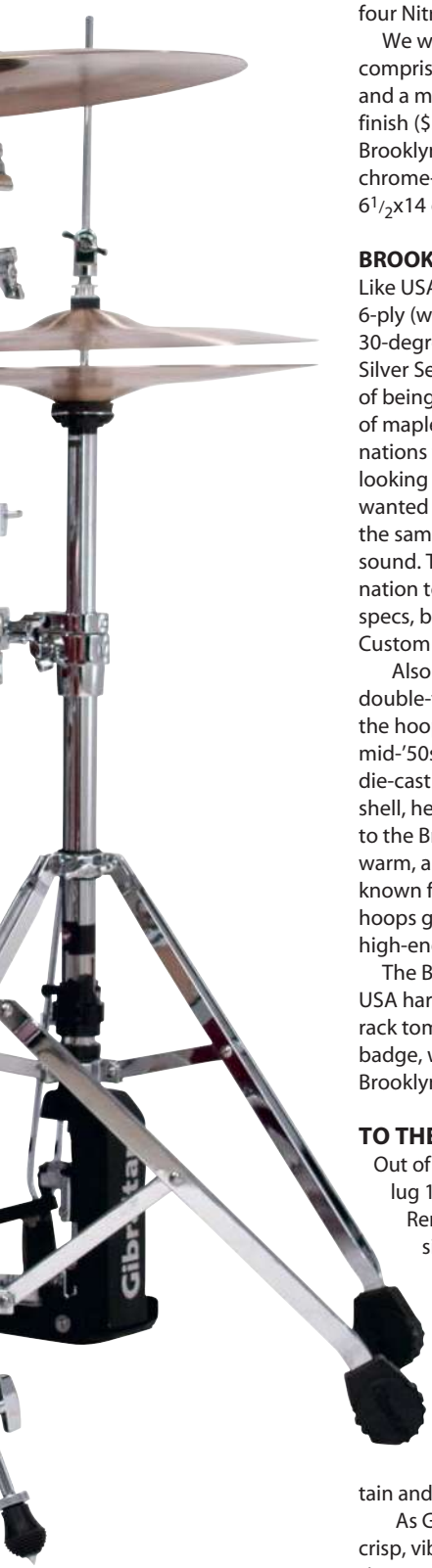
GRETSCH

Brooklyn Series Drumset and Snares

by Michael Dawson



From 1883 until 1970, the Gretsch factory was based in Brooklyn, New York. These days, all Gretsch USA Custom drums are handcrafted in a facility in Ridgeland, South Carolina, but to commemorate its roots, the company recently launched the new high-end Brooklyn series, which is available in six different shell packs and in four satin finishes and four Nitron wraps.

We were sent the GB-R844 configuration, which comprises an 18x24 bass drum, 9x13 and 16x16 toms, and a matching $6^1/_2$x14 wood snare, in Tabasco satin finish ($3,495). Gretsch also threw in two of its new Brooklyn series metal snares: the GB-4160 8-lug, 5x14 chrome-over-brass ($460.99) and the GB-4164 10-lug, $6^1/_2$x14 chrome-over-brass ($510.99).

BROOKLYN SPECS

Like USA Custom drums, Brooklyn series shells are 6-ply (without reinforcement hoops) and have 30-degree bearing edges with Gretsch's classic Silver Sealer interior. The difference is that instead of being all maple, Brooklyn shells are a combination of maple and poplar. "We tested many wood combinations to engineer the Brooklyn sound we were looking for," Gretsch rep Joe Mazza explains. "We wanted a sound that had its own personality, but at the same time they still needed to have a 'Gretsch' sound. The 6-ply maple/poplar was the best combination to fit our goals. The shells are made to Gretsch specs, but they're slightly thicker than the 6-ply USA Custom shell."

Also new to the Brooklyn line is the 3 mm, double-flange 302 hoop, which is a throwback to the hoops Gretsch used on all of its drums until the mid-'50s. (USA Custom snares and toms come with die-cast hoops.) The 302 hoop, plus the maple/poplar shell, helps bring a more lively, ambient characteristic to the Brooklyn series, while retaining the punchy, warm, and focused sound that Gretsch drums are known for. "The combination of the shell and 302 hoops gives a more open tone that has a little more high-end presence," Mazza says.

The Brooklyn series is finished off with Gretsch USA hardware, including suspension mounts for rack toms and a new black and pewter round badge, which is also a tribute to the original Brooklyn-era drums.

TO THE DRUMS

Out of the box, the six-lug 9x13 rack tom and eight-lug 16x16 floor tom, which came outfitted with Remo-made coated single-ply batters and clear single-ply bottoms, were tensioned with both heads at about medium-high. This jazz-like tuning provided a full and round sound with nice stick response and was a perfect contrast to the low-tuned but wide-open 18x24 bass drum. The kick came with a Remo Coated Powerstroke 3 batter and a coated single-ply resonant (no porthole), and it produced a huge sound with nice sustain and clear, punchy articulation.

As Gretsch intended, the Brooklyn toms had a crisp, vibrant attack, which made their otherwise classic, warm sound a bit brighter and more articulate, as if they were being run through an equalizer with a few dB of high-end boost. The floor tom was especially strong and lively sounding, and it had a super-fat tone. If you're a fan of that rumbling classic-rock-meets–Buddy Rich sound but you want a little more modern presence (think Jean-Paul Gaster with Clutch or Patrick Keeler with the Raconteurs), these drums, tuned this way, would be an excellent choice.

U.S.-made Gretsch drums are also highly coveted by studio drummers because their punchy, rich, and focused tones translate so well on recordings. To get a more studio-ready sound out of the Brooklyns, I replaced the solid front head of the bass drum with one that had a 4" port, and I stuffed a bedroom pillow inside. I also backed off the batter heads on the toms to about the lowest point they would go before the tone started to distort. The floor tom sounded absolutely killer no matter how I tuned it, but the rack tom took a little longer to get dialed in. Once I found the sweet spot, which was a bit higher than I expected, the rack tom's tone had a really nice pitch dip, a moderate sustain, and a snappy attack, all of which recorded well. The muffled and ported kick drum also had a strong, fat, and punchy sound with a clean attack and plenty of low-end boom. If you're after a big studio rock drum sound, à la Taylor Hawkins with Foo Fighters or Brad Wilk with Rage Against the Machine, the Brooklyns have that too.

BROOKLYN SERIES SNARES

The GB-R844 Brooklyn series shell pack comes with a matching 10-lug, $6^1/_2$x14, 6-ply maple/poplar snare that features 30-degree bearing edges, Gretsch's slick and simple Lightning throw-off, a coated single-ply batter head with a white dot underneath, and twenty-strand snare wires.

Gretsch also offers a few metal snares in the Brooklyn series. We were sent 5x14 and $6^1/_2$x14 chrome-over-brass models. (A $6^1/_2$x14 hammered brass drum is available as well.) The 5x14 has eight lugs, and the $6^1/_2$x14 has ten. Both feature the same heads, bearing edges, Lightning throw-off, and snare wires as the matching wood snare.

STRONG, STURDY HARDWARE

I applaud Gretsch for its straightforward, no-frills philosophy when it comes to drum hardware. Everything on this kit is designed to be simple, solid, and stable. The 302 hoops are super-strong; the rack tom suspension mount allows the drum to resonate fully yet doesn't cause it to bounce around; and the bass drum spurs are big, chunky, and easy to adjust, and they have a spiked tip with removable rubber feet. The floor tom legs are stout and hefty, and they come with large memory locks, which helps make setup quicker and more consistent. One minor word of caution, though, with regard to the Brooklyn series floor tom legs: Make sure to loosen the thumbscrews on the brackets a few extra turns so that the memory locks have enough clearance to pass by the hoop without hitting it. I usually loosen the thumbscrews just enough that the legs move freely, but when I did that with the Brooklyn floor tom, I couldn't get the legs off the drum. It's a minor detail but one worth mentioning.

THREE FOR ALL

Each of the three Brooklyn snares we reviewed had a wide tuning range and produced a sensitive yet strong sound that would work well within many different playing styles. They also functioned great as a trio, with each tuned differently for specific sounds. I loved the super-clean and articulate pop that the 5x14 produced when tuned tightly, while the $6\frac{1}{2}$x14 chrome-over-brass sounded very fat and open when tuned medium-low. (The 5x14 also produced a fat, spraying honk at lower tunings.) The matching maple/poplar snare felt most comfortable in the medium range, where the shell was able to speak with a rich, full voice for more all-purpose playing. This snare also sounded excellent when tuned super-low and muffled for a darker, tubbier vibe. With just these three drums, you'd have all your basic snare tones covered. Again, Gretsch's practicality, as well as its strong sense of what drummers actually *need*, wins out.

gretschdrums.com

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TRX

NRG Series

by Ben Lauffer

The NRG ("energy") series is handcrafted in Turkey, combining ancient metallurgical techniques with modern ideas to create vintage-inspired cymbals that deliver the power and projection needed by today's aggressive drummers. TRX sent us a tasting of this series, consisting of 10" and 12" splashes ($200, $225); 16", 18", and 20" crashes ($325, $375, $475); a 21" China ($550); a 22" ride ($525); and 14" hi-hats ($550).

FORM AND FUNCTION

Hardcore drummers appreciated TRX's Icon series but requested—if not demanded—a cymbal with a less "pretty" quality. TRX's answer is the NRG series. The cymbals are heavy, with a very aggressive taper and profile.

THE NRG OBJECTIVE

The NRG series consists of handcrafted cymbals developed to meet the needs of today's hardcore and metal drummers. All NRG cymbals are made with B20 bronze and have brilliant, polished bells and natural-finish bows.

These features not only increase the volume but also raise the pitch, allowing the cymbals to cut through in just about any situation. The bells of all of the models have a brilliant polished finish, which further allows the cymbals to sing and be heard through the music. The bodies of the cymbals have a natural finish, helping to create multiple colors of highs and lows and bringing back a touch of vintage-style complexity.

HI-HATS

The 14" hi-hats had a very focused sound when played with the tip of the stick. They never sounded thin, and they retained the musicality that's often lost with heavier cymbals. When I played with the shaft of the stick, I found that the sound got beefier but not clunky. These hats had a lower tone than I expected. They displayed the fullness and body of 15" hi-hats, while holding on to the clarity and articulation you'd expect from 14s.

SPLASHES

Though the profile is less apparent on the splashes, these small cymbals still had a lot of high-end overtones. The 12" splash sounded somewhat brittle, with a bit of pitch dip. The 10" version had a more full-bodied sound and was able to retain its fundamental tone at high volumes.

CRASHES

I'm often afraid that a 16" crash is going to give out when played very loudly. But this little guy stood its ground. Bigger cymbals have more mass, resulting in more energy when they're struck, which we perceive as sound. This explains why it's somewhat unfair to compare the 16" crash to a 20". However, the 16" NRG did make a nice fast crash that could certainly handle a beating.

The 18" model had a great wash but lacked a little low-end presence due to its extremely steep profile. I found that each cymbal in the NRG line, including this one, had a definite fundamental pitch, but with its own unique complexities. The distinctive lathing and hammering process, combined with the large, thick bells and exaggerated taper, allows many of the overtones to be heard.

The 20" crash would make a great primary crash or crash/ride. The initial attack was very loud and in your face, but the sustain rounded out the sound a bit. This cymbal is thickest at the bell and gradually thins out toward the edge, allowing for a clear, loud attack while retaining the inherent washing capabilities of such a large crash.

RIDE AND CHINA

The 22" NRG ride is a very heavy cymbal with a glossy ping that cuts through anything you throw at it. The bell was really pronounced and maintained a consistent sound, even when struck in different spots. This ride is a bit too thick to crash, but it will clearly articulate fast patterns with ease and leave you with a long decay.

My favorite cymbal of the NRG series is the 21" China. Chinas seem to be separated into two categories: mellow and low pitched or harsh and high pitched. The 21" NRG China offered the best of both worlds. It had the complex overtones found in mellower cymbals, and it combined the attack and abrasiveness of a high-pitched China without being *too* harsh. Believe it or not, I found this to be the most musical cymbal of the group. If you're looking for a China that can cross genres from metal to pop, hip-hop, and jazz, this is it.

WRAP-UP

TRX's NRG series is taking Turkish cymbals beyond what we would classify as a "traditional" sound. While sacrificing some warmth and musicality, the line gains the projection and "energy" needed to hold its own for today's hardcore and metal drummers.

trxcymbals.com

GROOVE JUICE

Stick Grip

by David Ciauro

No drummer revels in the experience of dropping or inadvertently hurling a drumstick during a performance. Yet the occurrence is almost inevitable—not only to our own embarrassment but also to the chagrin of the unfortunate bandmate or audience member that just got smacked upside the head. Stick Grip by Groove Juice offers drummers the option of an invisible remedy in their pursuit of limiting, if not eradicating, incidents of projectile drumsticks.

In testing, the spray was easy to apply, dried in less than a minute, and provided a secure grip without leaving any residue on the fingers or palm. The product successfully endured a solid weekend of sweaty drumming, showing no decrease in its sufficiently tacky grip. Impressively, Stick Grip's bond with the drumstick was not undone by scratching, and the grip maintained a consistent feel. It was always tacky but never icky. If desired, the product can be removed with some isopropyl alcohol and a soft, wet cloth.

Stick Grip is invisible, which would be a selling point for drummers who don't like the look and/or feel of gloves or stick wraps. If you use drum gloves, Stick Grip provides additional tack, akin to baseball players putting pine tar on their batting gloves. Or perhaps your hands sweat excessively or you have a tendency to alter how firmly you hold your sticks in certain playing situations. In either case, Stick Grip offers an effective solution that doesn't alter anything aesthetically and also doesn't dramatically change the feel of the stick in your hand.

groovejuiceinc.com

DW 5002 AD4 Double Bass Drum Pedal and 9000 Series Airlift Hardware

by Mike Haid

DW recently added several innovative upgrades to the 5002 double bass drum pedal, a longtime favorite of the company's pedal family, and introduced a new pneumatic hardware design, called Airlift. Let's take a look at each.

IF IT AIN'T BROKE…

So what's new with the updated DW 5002 AD4 Accelerator double pedal ($699.99)? Most notably, a 9000-series-style cam follower (Dual Bearing Spring Rocker) for the master and slave pedals that works together with the spring assembly and stroke adjustment to relieve stress and friction from the pedal. This small but mighty upgrade adds a smooth, responsive feel to the solid, heavy-duty 5000 frame, creating a perfect balance of substance and finesse.

Other improvements include the versatile Tri-Pivot toe clamp, which was designed by DW R&D specialist Rich Sikra. This ingenious system utilizes circular rubber reinforcing discs—one underneath the toe clamp and two on the footplate. All three pads swivel in place to accommodate any thickness and/or diameter of bass drum hoop. I tried the pedal on several hoops of different sizes, and each time it locked in with a solid grip, without any slippage.

There's also a nonskid, textured rubber grip pad underneath the baseplate. This replaces the previous hook-and-loop-fastener backing that held the pedal in place. Now, with the new rubber backing, the pedal stays firmly planted but is much easier to adjust from its position on the bass drum hoop. The rubber grip also worked surprisingly well on the slave pedal, even on thick carpeting. And you can always utilize the metal spikes to prevent the pedal from nudging forward, if you have powerful double bass technique or a tendency to dance on the pedals.

The 5000 series bass drum pedals still offer the same drive-system options, aluminum hex shafts, pedal plates and linkages, 101 two-way beaters, and built-in spurs. As the DW specs read: "The Accelerator (AD4) drive system offers an eccentric motion that creates an indirect relationship between the sprocket and the footboard, increasing the velocity of the pedal by shortening the length of the stroke. It is recommended for situations that require increased speed and sensitivity. The Turbo (TD4) concentric drive system maintains a direct relationship between the sprocket and the footboard to provide a solid, powerful, consistent feel and response." The innovative upgrades to this already popular pedal help loosen the feel, strengthen the grip, and allow for easier adjustment once the pedal is attached to the hoop. All three are worthwhile and thoughtful improvements.

AIRLIFT TOM AND SNARE STANDS

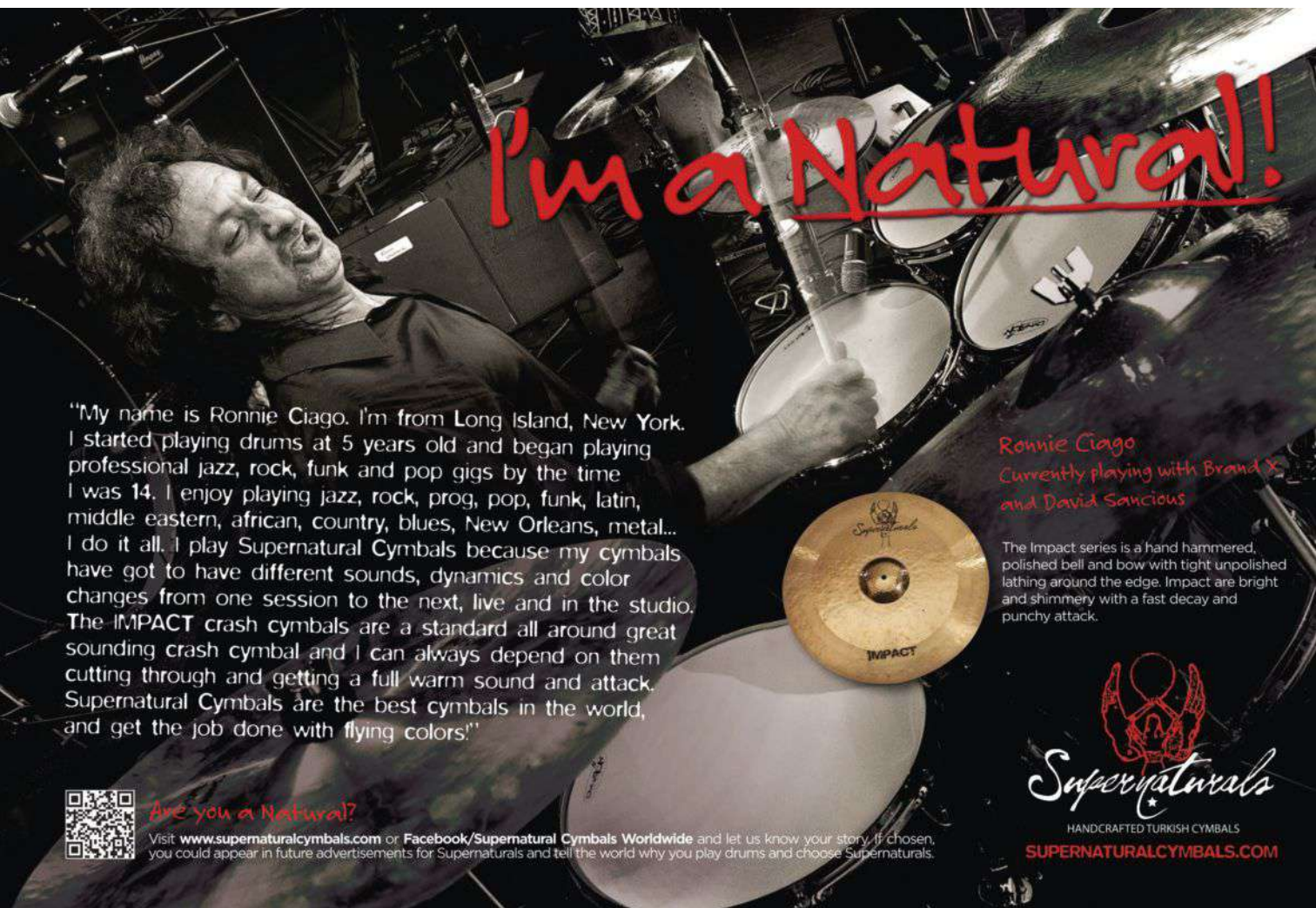
The DW Airlift power-assist pneumatic system, designed by the hardware inventor Randall May, is an extraordinary innovation that helps eliminate the backbreaking struggle of adjusting the height of your drums once they're mounted on a stand. This has always been a challenging task, where you have to support the weight of the toms while loosening the wing nut in order to prevent the bottom tom hoop from taking a chunk out of your bass drum shell.

When the toms are mounted to the 9900AL Airlift double tom stand ($349.99) and the wing screw is loosened, the drums literally float on an air cushion provided by a built-in pneumatic shock. This allows you to effortlessly lift the toms to the desired height and position and then simply tighten the wing screw to lock them in place. Just be cautious and make sure you have hold of the toms as you loosen the wing screw, so that the tom stand doesn't turn in the direction of the bass drum and bump the shell.

These heavy-duty stands still offer all the same high-end features we've grown accustomed to in the hefty 9000 series. The double tom stand features double-braced legs and a frame made of heavy-gauge tubing, with plastic tube insulators and oversize joints to minimize wobble. Hinged memory locks keep everything firmly in place. The tom arms are designed to fit DW TB12 brackets, and there's a DW auxiliary clamp for mounting cymbal arms.

This Airlift technology is also a blessing with the 9300AL snare stand ($316.99), especially when you're using a heavyweight drum and trying to position the stand at just the right height—between songs in the middle of a gig. One complaint with the snare stand is that it doesn't quite go low enough to accommodate deep drums. But if you need extra height, it works well, especially as a rack tom stand. It can certainly bear the weight of the heaviest of snares with its heavy-duty construction, double-braced legs, and memory locks. The offset basket and toothless tilter are my favorite features for pinpoint positioning, because they allow this behemoth to twist and turn in any direction, with multiple angle adjustments.

The DW Airlift system is a very welcome, and long awaited, feature that's sure to change the way drum hardware is designed for the future. Anything that can take the heavy lifting off the drummer and make drum and hardware placement quicker is an important and worthwhile investment.
dwdrums.com


I'm a Natural!
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MXL

DRUM-MIKING KITS

by Mark Parsons

Studio Drum Kit

MXL has come out with three new drum-miking packages, each with an intended application—the Studio Drum Kit, the Club Drum Kit, and the Kick & Snare Kit. Let's take a look and a listen.

STUDIO DRUM KIT

This is MXL's flagship drum-miking package, consisting of six mics (bass drum, snare, overhead pair, and tom pair). The set comes with a sturdy aluminum flight case, a pair of shock mounts for the overheads, and clips or mounts for the other mics.

The A-55 Kicker—a cardioid dynamic model designed for bass drum—is a relatively large mic, but that's mitigated by the built-in pivot, which contains both the threaded stand mount and the XLR output. This makes placement a bit easier, although it was a tight squeeze to get the mic through a 4" port.

My overall impression is that this is a well-balanced kick mic, with a good blend of classic and contemporary sound. It had a full low end (a little boost around 100 Hz) and good snap on top (slightly enhanced beater articulation at approximately 5 kHz), with a broad but shallow reduction through the mids. This all combined to provide a fairly "finished" kick sound, yet one that was not so pre-equalized that it wouldn't work in a wide variety of styles. Very nice.

Club Drum Kit

The kit also contains a pair of 603S small-diaphragm condensers for use as overheads. Constructed like typical pencil mics ($^{7}/_{8}$x5$^{1}/_{4}$), these are ostensibly cardioids, although "wide cardioid" might be a better description. In an X/Y (coincident pair) configuration they didn't exhibit as much separation on the cymbals as some other small condensers I've used. However, this isn't necessarily a dig at the 603S, since there are benefits to having a broader pickup pattern, especially in the common spaced-pair configuration.

The 603Ss were fairly linear through the midrange, and there was a little lift in the 8–10 kHz range, making the mics somewhat sparkly sounding. We ran these models alongside Neumann KM184s—similar-size cardioid condensers, albeit pricier—which are considered somewhat bright sounding themselves. The 603S was in roughly the same ballpark up through the upper mids but was a little brighter on top. If you use extremely bright cymbals and you whack the heck out of them, these mics might give you a cymbal-centric overhead mix. But in other cases they'd put the right amount of sparkle in the overheads without your having to reach for excessive EQ.

Kick & Snare Kit

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ELECTRONIC REVIEW

For the snare, MXL includes the 606 small condenser. It looks like the 603S, only 1" shorter and with the addition of two switches—a high-pass filter and an attenuation pad. The 606 sounded quite a bit like the 603S and worked well on the snare. In this application it sounded like a nice dynamic mic, only with better extension on the top end, which allowed me to get the crisp snap I often have to dial in after the fact.

The 606 also had a hotter output signal than a typical dynamic would, but even when used to close-mike loud rimshots on a snare, it didn't distort and the pad wasn't required. Likewise, we didn't use the high-pass filter in this application, as we wanted to capture the meat of the tone.

The Drum Cube is a relatively short, squared-off large condenser mic (cardioid only, with no switches) designed for use on toms. It captured a big and full sound with very good stick articulation. As a bonus, this model also sounded very nice when used as overheads.

The MXL Studio Drum Kit lists for $1,099, offering a serious bang for the buck if you're looking to start tracking your drums with fidelity and clarity.

CLUB DRUM KIT

This package has the basics covered, with bass drum, snare, and overhead mics. The bass drum mic is the same solid A-55 Kicker, but the overheads are a pair of 606s. As indicated previously, the 606 sounds similar to the 603S, with the bonus of a pad and high-pass filter.

For the snare, this kit includes an LSM-5GR, which is a dynamic handheld vocal mic, roughly similar in size and shape to a Shure SM58. When compared with an SM58, however, the LSM-5GR had less transient response on top, and the presence peak was at a lower frequency, making it a little thicker sounding in the mids. But with a little EQ, it worked fine in the mix.

Personally, I would have preferred another 606 for the snare, but that would undoubtedly raise the price. At just $399 for the package, though, you could look at the LSM-5GR as a freebie to go along with the A-55 Kicker and pair of 606s. An aluminum flight case is included.

KICK & SNARE KIT

This package comprises the core of drumset sound reinforcement for a smaller venue—bass drum and snare mics—and the choices here are good ones. The bass drum mic is again the A-55 Kicker, and the snare model is the 606 small condenser. Here's an example of where the broader polar pattern of the 606 is a benefit. If you're miking only the kick and snare on your drumset, you'll likely want to back off the snare mic a little in terms of proximity and let it also capture some hi-hat and other nearby pieces. With its good transient response, full range, and wide cardioid pattern, the MXL 606 worked well in this application. The Kick & Snare Kit lists for $259 and includes an aluminum flight case and shock mount for the 606. Another great deal!
mxlmics.com

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GEARING UP Drumkit Details, On Stage and Up Close

PRINCE'S JOHN BLACKWELL

Interview by Billy Amendola • Photos by Afshin Shahidi

Drums: Tama Starclassic (bubinga and cordia)
A. 5x14 JB signature steel snare
B. 5x10 tom
C. 5x12 tom
D. 6x13 tom
E. 14x14 floor tom
F. 14x16 floor tom
G. 14x26 bass drum

"When the Welcome 2 America tour was in development, Prince and I were talking about the structure of the kit," Blackwell explains. "He wanted more of a traditional rock 'n' roll setup, so he asked me to have Tama make two bass drums. I never played kick drums this big and never had an interest in trying. But Prince always tells me to trust him, and I always do. Needless to say, I was amazed by the sound of drums that size. Prince's first word was *booty*, meaning the kick had a lot of boom to it. Now, a 22" bass drum looks so small to me.

"The depth of the rack toms is different too, because I wanted that quick response."

Electronics: Yamaha DTX-MULTI 12 and DTX electronic pads

"Under the stage, I have a DTX900 electronic brain, which runs all the pads on stage. We use it to sample Prince's sounds from his Linn LM-1 drum machine, and then we trigger them from the pads. I use two pads, because on certain songs I have to play hi-hat and snare with the left hand while the right hand plays samples for songs like '1999,' 'Baby I'm a Star,' and 'Controversy.' For 'Controversy,' I have to play keyboard parts and other samples while also playing the hi-hat and snare drum, so being left-handed and playing a right-handed kit is very helpful."

Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 14" K hi-hats (from the 1940s)
2. 19" K Custom Hybrid China
3. 18" K China (with sizzles)
4. 12" splash (from the 1930s)
5. 18" K Custom Dark crash
6. 22" K Dark Medium ride (with sizzles)
7. 13" Avedis hi-hats (from the 1920s)
8. 18" K Constantinople crash

"My hi-hats are original K's from Istanbul. I love to collect old cymbals, and I also use prototypes. I'm grateful to the Zildjian family for letting me make my sounds and ideas become a reality. Also, it's a request from Prince for what he wants to hear out of my cymbals—especially when it comes to playing stadiums and arenas."

Hardware: Tama Road Pro, including a limited edition chrome Iron Cobra double pedal and Iron Cobra hi-hat stands

Heads: Remo Emperor X or Vintage Emperor snare batter, Vintage Emperor or clear Pinstripe tom batters, Powerstroke 4 bass drum batters, and Coated Ambassador front heads

"I've been using Pinstripes to give me a sound with a lot of tone, which Prince likes to hear. I use Coated Ambassadors on the front of the bass drums because Prince likes to write graffiti on the heads every night, which means we have to change the heads after every show."

Sticks: Zildjian John Blackwell Jia model

WOODSHED LIVE

MIKE JOHNSTON

MikesLessons.com
Folsom, California

Story by Michael Dawson
Photos by Sasha Leahovcenco

Six years ago, the Sacramento-based drummer Mike Johnston had to figure out a way to keep his private students' lessons on track during the weeks when he was on the road with his band Simon Says or other projects. "When I would do short tours," Johnston explains, "I would film lessons for my students and put them on this brand-new thing called YouTube. Then, when I'd get back, the video would have something like 35,000 views, even though I only showed it to five or ten students. It was crazy, but I started researching and realized how much of a need there was for quality education and high-quality sound on the Internet. That's how I got started."

These days, Johnston runs one of the most successful drum education websites in the world, MikesLessons.com, which includes a deep catalog of downloadable video instruction and play-along MP3s, plus subscription-based live lesson streams (broken down into beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels). He's also an in-demand clinician for Meinl cymbals, Gretsch drums, DW hardware, Vater sticks, Ahead Armor cases, and Aquarian heads. And he hosts seven-day drum camps from March through October out of a beautiful building in scenic Folsom, California. "When I knew that we wanted to make MikesLessons.com its own stand-alone facility and do drum camps," Johnston says, "we wanted to find something that was within walking distance of a hotel, so that whoever came here wouldn't have to rent a car or anything. We searched all over northern California and found this spot, right in the same parking lot as a hotel by the American River."

The current MikesLessons.com facility is set up, as

Control room

Live lesson and drum camp classroom

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Mainstream Rock,
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Mark Guiliana
Fusion

Mike Johnston
Clinician/Educator

Elaine Bradley
Up & Coming

MODERN DRUMMER 2012 READERS POLL Winner

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Jonathan Schang (District 97) – Evans, Promark, & Puresound

PERCUSSIONIST
Richard Bravo – Evans

EDUCATIONAL BOOK
Systems: Book 1 by Ari Hoenig – Evans, Puresound
The Complete Guide to Brushes by Florian Alexandru-Zorn – Evans

EDUCATIONAL DVD
Taking Center Stage by Neil Peart – Promark
Methods & Mechanics II by Todd Sucherman – Promark
Wicked Beats by Gil Sharone – Promark

RECORDED PERFORMANCE
The Hunter-Brann Dailor – Evans, Puresound

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Johnston jokes, "like a drumming day spa," complete with a seating area for students and parents, plus a big flat-screen TV constantly spinning Modern Drummer Festival Weekend DVDs; a private lesson room with two Gretsch drumsets and Meinl Byzance cymbals ("We don't treat the student as less than the instructor, so both use high-end equipment"); a practice room outfitted with Yamaha DTX electronic drumkits and laptops so campers can Skype with their families; a control room with

Lesson room

Practice room

Main kit

audio/video equipment for moderating the live lessons; and a large classroom with eight DW Go Anywhere practice kits and a Gretsch Renown or USA Custom drumset, which is what Johnston uses to conduct group lessons during camp and to film live and archived content for his website. HD cameras are mounted throughout the room, and all the wires are hidden behind the walls, as Johnston explains, "to give a very clean look."

Prior to leasing the building in Folsom, Johnston and his wife, Amber, created all of the prerecorded content and ran the live

Is the
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the S.L.P.
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COUNTRY,
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LATIN PERCUSSION

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online drum instruction for MikesLessons.com out of a spare bedroom in their house. "We took the doors off the closet, and I put a computer in there," Mike recalls. "That was where Amber was set up, just three feet away from me. The Q&A in the live lessons was so disjointed, because she would have earplugs in and I'd have to shout to her, and she'd shout questions back to me. It was like the Wild West, because we had no one to look at and copy. We were just doing it on our own."

Johnston spent two years producing prerecorded content for YouTube and MikesLessons.com before investing in the technology required to stream live lessons over the Internet. "The trigger for live lessons was an interview for a drum magazine from South Africa called *SA Drums & Percussion*," he says. "They said they wanted to thank me because they didn't have many drum teachers and they were learning to play from my YouTube videos. I found that unacceptable, because those videos were just meant to be tips and tricks. I would *never* want someone to go out and only play my YouTube videos on a gig—you'd be fired in a heartbeat. So I decided I had to find a way to give those guys forty-five minutes' worth of education, instead of just the ten minutes that I could post on YouTube at the time.

"I researched live broadcasting, and I found that the Chicago Cubs were broadcasting their games and letting their fans talk to each other via a chat room," Johnston continues. "I contacted their IT director and asked him how he was doing it. He didn't give me the recipe for his chocolate chip cookies, but he definitely pointed me in the right direction."

The drum camps came about a few years later, in an effort to provide a more affordable and valuable experience for MikesLessons.com students and YouTube followers who wanted to come to California to study with Johnston privately. "People were starting to fly in from around the world to take lessons with me for a month or so at a time," Mike says. "They would stay in a hotel and maybe get one lesson with me every two or three days. It was astronomically expensive for them, so I decided to find a more efficient way to do it. That's what this facility is for. Luckily, MikesLessons.com had a strong group of 5,000 or 6,000 students at the time, so I was able to poll them to see if they would be interested in coming to a camp. Once we had about 300 people say yes, we felt comfortable investing a lot of money in this place. It was a risk, but since we opened, the camps have been sold out at least a year in advance."

With such a packed schedule, you'd think it would be tough for Johnston to find time to work on his own drumming. But he learned a valuable lesson on time management from fellow Meinl artist Benny Greb. "We got to spend a week together doing a drum camp here," Johnston explains. "When we sent the campers back to the hotel at 10 P.M., he and I would stay here until 1 A.M. practicing and sharing ideas. I asked him how I could get some German-style efficiency going on, and he recommended writing down every minute—not every hour—of a day, from the moment I woke up until the moment I fell asleep. He guaranteed that I could find two or three hours of extra time in there. I didn't think it was possible, since I'm already so busy. But what I discovered was that while I thought I was going all the time, what I was really doing was Facebooking, or Tweeting, or doing something unproductive, like spending an hour eating lunch at a restaurant when it would only take up fifteen minutes if I brought in my own food. I've been practicing religiously ever since."

Is the S.L.P. for Bennie the S.L.P. for You?
The new Sound Lab Project from Tama is eight great snares, each with its own clear identity. Making a choice ain't easy. Bennie Rodgers II's selection? The G-Maple LGMI37. "The 7 x 13 G-Maple has quickly become my go-to snare for all genres. I can tune it for anything... deep, cranked, you name it. Plus it looks amazing. I'm rocking with the S.L.P. series!" Which S.L.P. will do it for you?
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JOHN SHERMAN

He's a bit of a cutup, **Red Fang**'s drummer is. But don't let that wicked smile fool you—what he and his bandmates hit you with live and on record is some of the most serious hard rock around.

by Billy Brennan

James Rexroad

John Sherman is all lively eyes, clownish grins, and swinging fists as he provides the backbone to the irresistibly head-banging riffs of the Portland, Oregon, rockers Red Fang. When asked to comment on his band's sound, Sherman chooses to eschew genres in favor of pointing to one of his personal mottos: Keep it tight and loose. "I think that really describes our music," he says. "It's tight and loose at the same time. It works!"

Last year the band released its first proper album, *Murder the Mountains* (a previous self-titled release collected two limited edition EPs), and secured premier tour spots on the Mayhem Festival, and, later, in support of Mastodon. The album and live show left many heavy-rock fans buzzing, but Red Fang is hardly an overnight sensation. "We've been together for six years," Sherman explains, "and we've played everything from the smallest, dirtiest, darkest clubs to gigs with crowds in the thousands. We hope to keep it going—we've got big plans for the future."

Despite these recent successes, Sherman is fast to insist that he and his bandmates are "still the same goofballs." He adds with a laugh, "Even on the Mastodon tour, we were the only ones without a bus. We still had our '90s van—without a trailer. We just strap everything in and sneeze all over each other."

Still riding high from 2011's momentum, John took the time to give *MD* a glimpse at what makes him and Red Fang tick.

MD: How did you start playing drums?
John: I was always drumming on things growing up, but it wasn't until sixth grade or so, when I was able to take band class, that I actually began to play. Plus a friend down the street had a kit, so I would always be over there trying to play.

My first kit was a crappy old set from the '60s, but it did have a gold-sparkle finish. It looked really cool, and back then that's all I cared about. But I only had like half of a bass drum pedal, so I took an old broom handle, cut it down, and wrapped it in duct tape for a beater.

MD: Does being on the road almost nonstop affect your drumming?
John: Being on the road keeps me playing and makes me sharper. Plus we're always touring with other bands, so I can get together with their drummers and swap stuff.

MD: What's the best piece of advice another drummer gave you on tour?
John: The best advice might have been to always change your drumheads before it becomes absolutely necessary. If you bust a snare or kick head in the middle of a song, you're screwed. So I try to change my heads as often as possible.

MD: What's the songwriting process like in Red Fang?
John: It's pretty collaborative and usually starts with a little seed that we all put our bit to. Sometimes it's super-awesome and works great; other times it's super-painful and takes *forever*. We're four different guys, and if it's not just one of us who's the songwriter, everyone has to be happy and sign off on it.

One of our mottos is definitely "Keep it simple, stupid." If you keep messing with stuff, you end up with a song that doesn't make sense at all. We used to *love* doing that and having songs with eight different time signatures and fifteen parts. We're not about that anymore. We're trying to make…songs. [laughs]

MD: So what's your approach behind the kit?
John: I try to let the guys suggest options for things that I could do, because it's hard to be objective. Your instinct is to throw every little trick you know into everything, but that doesn't make for a great song. Sometimes it's great to have a really simple rock beat, and then, all of a sudden, there's that one moment where you do something that makes people go, "Oh, man, what was *that*?" And then you're back to the beat. That's *way* better than a nonstop barrage of drum licks. To me, at least.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Sherman plays a Darwin kit with an 11x14 rack tom, a 16x18 floor tom, and an 18x24 bass drum. He alternates between two snares: a $6^1/_2$x14 Pearl Steve Ferrone signature model and a $6^1/_2$x14 Ludwig Supra-Phonic. His cymbals, all from Paiste's Alpha series, include 15" hi-hats, 19" and 20" Rock crashes, and a 24" Rock ride. John's hardware includes a DW 5000 single bass drum pedal, a DW 5000 hi-hat stand, and three straight cymbal stands made by various manufacturers.

CONGRATULATIONS!

MODERN DRUMMER Readers Poll Winners

A SOUND OBSESSION

SABIAN

PHIL COLLINS
Hall of Fame

NEIL PEART
#1 Progressive Rock
#1 Educational DVD
Taking Center Stage

TONY ROYSTER JR.
#1 R&B

JIM RILEY
#1 Country
Clinician/Educator
Educational Book
Song Charting Made Easy

JOE MORELLO
#1 Educational Book
Rudimental Jazz

TODD SUCHERMAN
Progressive Rock
Educational DVD
Methods & Mechanics II

CHAD SMITH
Mainstream Rock

JAY LANE
Alternative

GEORGE "SPANKY" MCCURDY
R&B

CHRIS DAVE
R&B

JEFF "TAIN" WATTS
Jazz

MARK GUILIANA
Fusion

RICH REDMOND
Country

CHRIS MCHUGH
Country

RICHARD BRAVO
Percussionist

BASHIRI JOHNSON
Percussionist

VIRGIL DONATI
Educational DVD
Double Bass Drum Freedom

PARENTING PERSPECTIVES

Appreciating the Sacrifices of My Father

Like many of us whose lifelong passion is drumming, *MD* writer **David Ciauro** has traveled a somewhat crooked path to success. It wouldn't have been possible, he suggests, without the support of an understanding dad.

November 1989. That was when I received my first issue of *Modern Drummer* magazine. I came home from school one day to find cover artist Jonathan Mover's face staring back at me when I went to put my backpack down on my desk. I froze in excitement and confusion. *What is THIS? And where did it come from?* I was eleven years old at the time, and although I'd been drumming since the ripe ol' age of three, I define this as the moment when I officially became a drummer.

I still have that timeworn issue of *MD*, and every now and then I like to flip through the pages and recapture a faint taste of that innocent youthful giddiness. I recently experienced an interesting shift in perspective in this nostalgic tradition. The smile on my face was not for me; it was in recognition of my father, the man who sat me on his lap when I was a toddler and first introduced me to the drums.

I was overcome by gratitude and appreciation for his being a constant pillar of support in my life, and for the sacrifices he made so that my sister and I could be afforded opportunities he didn't have growing up. Moreover, he's the best role model you could ask for, because he's human to a fault. He's always been too humble and self-deprecating to understand how he could ever be perceived as my hero, and he's never been the best at conveying his emotions in his words. His actions, though, have served as unintentional life lessons that have made a profound impact on me.

My father played drums professionally for many years, while also holding a day job as an electrician. He started his own company the year I was born, 1977, and worked seven days a week from dawn to dusk, building his business and then gigging on the weekends in a wedding band. His musical aspirations eventually gave way to his business, but the number of hours he worked never changed. I often felt his absence as a child, and I lived for the moments we shared together jamming in our music room.

As I got older, I started to resent his having to work so much. I misinterpreted his little gestures—such as taking the time to stop at a local music store during his hectic workday to pick up a magazine he thought I'd appreciate and dropping it off so it would be there when I got home from school—as his way of buying something to placate my frustration. Sadly, it wasn't until very recently that I understood the subtext and nuance of those gestures. They were all he could do at the time, and it was his way of letting me know he was thinking about me. I didn't realize he was working so much to enable me to have the opportunities he didn't have.

Although he may not have agreed with many of the decisions I made through my life, he also never tried to project his life experiences and the choices he made on me. He never pushed me into being an electrician so I could one day take over his business. He supported my drumming, and our shared love of drums was always the glue in our relationship, but he also supported my decision not to go to a music college after high school. He supported every band I was in, even if he didn't care for the music. He supported me when I informed him of my decision to switch majors in college from business to English.

In 1999, he supported me when I chose a job in project management instead of one that involved writing. In 2001, he supported my decision to leave that job to try my hand at working with the special-needs population as I considered the idea of becoming a teacher. In 2003, he supported my going back to a corporate job after I realized I didn't want to teach. And, in 2006, when my daughter was born, he

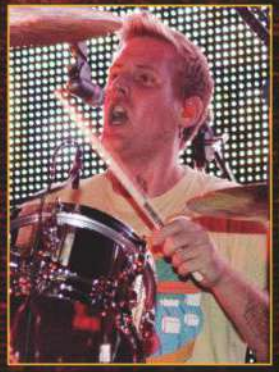
Navene Koperweis #1

UP AND COMING

TAMA THANKS MD READERS FOR RECOGNIZING NAVENE'S WORK WITH ANIMALS AS LEADERS, AS WELL AS ACKNOWLEDGING DALE, CHARLIE, BRANN, JOHN, AND SPANKY FOR THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS.

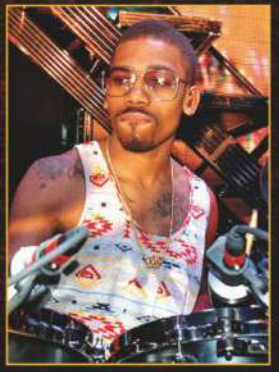
Dale Crover
The Melvins
#3 ALTERNATIVE
#5 RECORDED PERFORMANCE

Charlie Benante
Anthrax
#3 METAL



Brann Dailor
Mastodon
#5 METAL
#4 RECORDED PERFORMANCE

John Blackwell
Prince
#2 R&B



George "Spanky" McCurdy
Lady GaGa
#3 R&B

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FIRST PERSON

supported my leaving behind the corporate world to be a stay-at-home dad while I figured out a career path that I would find more fulfilling.

In November of 2009, happenstance found me at the offices of *Modern Drummer*, where I was picking up my first piece of gear to review for the magazine. Exactly twenty years after my father bought me my first issue, and ten years after graduating with my BA in English, I was finally going to be combining two things I loved dearly: drumming and writing. At the same time, I was about to start a master's program in mental health counseling, once again with my father's support.

Since then, my father has seen me hit my stride both personally and professionally. I can now see that he knew more than I ever did, that I had the potential to do whatever I wanted. Instead of faulting me for taking longer than some to realize what I wanted to do, or feeling disillusioned by my numerous changes in direction, he quietly watched from the sidelines as I tried to find myself. He never viewed anything I did as a failure; rather, he saw it as a process of eliminating things I knew I wouldn't be happy with or be good at doing.

On my current career path I may never reap the monetary rewards to allow me to offer my daughter the same luxuries I had growing up, but I know that the time I've been able to spend with her, and the appreciation I have for my father's hard work and support, will offer her a different path of opportunities. Similarly, I may never be able to buy my father a Cadillac for his retirement, but the times we share now, and how close we've become over the past few years, are greatly due to the ways that he's been a part of my life. As a parent, I've learned that life unfolds as it should—and typically doesn't follow the design of our initial intentions.

My being a part of *Modern Drummer* has brought my father and me closer than we've ever been. Whether it's him coming over to the house to check out some gear I'm reviewing, talking about a drummer I got to interview, being able to bring him backstage at the 2010 Modern Drummer Festival, or getting to take him to the 2010 winter NAMM show—these are all things that would not have been possible without his support. They also wouldn't have been possible if he had pushed me to do things he felt were for my own good rather than let my life take its own course.

I know my father is proud of me, but to be able to pay this small tribute to him in the magazine that he introduced me to is perhaps the most fitting way for me to let him know how truly proud I am to call him Dad.

Happy Father's Day, Dad.

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With one foot in tradition and one in the future, the exceptionally diverse, super-polished pounder is at the forefront of a scene that shows little interest in what *can't* be done on the drumset.

Periphery's Matt Halpern

Matt Halpern first appeared on the cover of *Modern Drummer* at age thirteen. Well, sort of. When visitors entered the after-party of his bar mitzvah, the first thing they saw was the young drummer's face on a mocked-up cover of *MD*. "Matt Halpern: Drummer to the Stars!" read the headline, and if the guests were lucky, they might hear the young lion perform a solo on his Ludwig kit. Even then Halpern had big goals. Fifteen years later, his musical dreams have come true, and he's enjoying his first *Modern Drummer* cover story, for real.

While Halpern is often lumped in with the progressive metal trend known as djent (a term he downplays—"It's simply the sound of a certain type of palm muting on a guitar string"), the twenty-eight-year-old Baltimore native is a fan of drummers as wide-ranging as Dennis Chambers, Mike Mangini, Stewart Copeland, and Roger Taylor. And Halpern's technique is as unusual as his taste is diverse. Watching him play his stripped-down three-piece set, you might first notice his somewhat bizarre technique. Halpern changes stick grips constantly, to match the music and to implement ideas that blast from his kit like shooting stars across a midnight sky. Whether he's using a German, French, or American grip, he bastardizes each for ultimate fluidity and flexibility, as his drumming flashes through rock, metal, reggae, and jazz styles with equal smoothness and passion.

Halpern first came to many people's attention as a member of the progressive metal heat seekers Animals as Leaders. His star began to rise in earnest when he joined Periphery in 2009, a gig that seemingly left every drummer who shared the stage with the band an instant convert to his otherworldly rhythmic ideas and unstoppable energy. Halpern appears on Periphery's self-titled 2010 album, the 2011 EP *Icarus*, and the brand-new long-player, which is also titled *Periphery*. The first two releases were recorded piecemeal, with Matt playing a V-Drums kit and replicating rhythms programmed by guitarist/composer/mastermind Misha Mansoor, one of contemporary heavy music's true visionaries. For the band's new release, however, the drummer recorded on an acoustic Mapex set.

Throughout, Halpern's playing is an attention grabber. The half-time rhythmic stomp of "JI" is matched by the tom fills on steroids of "Make Total Destroy," where Halpern's snare drum slap and hi-hat slash are as powerful as his double-pedal fury. "Mile Zero" begins with a nearly classic-rock groove, but Halpern's lockstep with bassist/producer Adam Getgood—his patterns vacuum sealed and madly electronic—are anything but old-school. Elsewhere, Matt double-fists a pummeling tom-filled attack on "Ragnarok," revs up his inner Dave Lombardo for "Scarlet," and performs a flexible, extremely inspired solo within the slippery groove of "Erised."

MD spoke with Halpern as Periphery was putting the finishing touches on the album that, years from now, will likely be viewed as *the* breakout performance of a truly monstrous drummer.

Story by Ken Micallef • Photos by Sahisnu Sadarpo

"I work out ideas in front of an audience. I'll think about what I want to play, then I'll go for it. If I nail it in a high-pressure situation, **that proves I can do it at any time."**

MD: Periphery has a great presence on YouTube and on the Internet in general.

Matt: When Misha Mansoor began writing songs for Periphery, he'd also been playing drums. Then he began programming drums with Toontrack's EZdrummer and Superior Drummer programs. Whenever Misha recorded a new song, he would post it on SoundClick.com. Prior to the band getting signed, Misha had released 130 free downloadable tracks. That free music really built our foundation as an Internet band. Once the album was released and we began touring, we built on that momentum. All of us in Periphery [which also includes guitarists Mark Holcomb and Jake Bowen and singer Spencer Sotelo] are very active on the forums—we all teach lessons—and I am very active on my site, Bandhappy.com, which is about musicians reaching out to their fans.

MD: When did you begin playing drums?

Matt: I had my first kiddie set at three; I got a Ludwig kit at six. Through a couple local teachers I learned rudiments, time signatures, rates, and dynamics. One teacher focused on jazz and Latin fundamentals, and the other opened me up to Screaming Headless Torsos and that style and feel. I practiced the twenty-six rudiments and worked out of books, and I mixed and matched different hand patterns to replicate the rudiments between the hands and feet.

If you play a paradiddle between your hands and feet, you can turn it into a beat. I really focused on the

INFLUENCES

Queensrÿche Operation: Mindcrime (Scott Rockenfield) /// **Screaming Headless Torsos** Screaming Headless Torsos (Jojo Mayer) /// **Dave Matthews Band** Under the Table and Dreaming (Carter Beauford) /// **Queen** Greatest Hits (Roger Taylor) /// **Dream Theater** Images and Words (Mike Portnoy) /// **Deftones** Around the Fur (Abe Cunningham) /// **Rush** Moving Pictures (Neil Peart) /// **Metallica** Master of Puppets (Lars Ulrich) /// **The Police** Greatest Hits (Stewart Copeland) /// **James Brown** Greatest Hits (Jabo Starks, Clyde Stubblefield, others)

paradiddle; I would note if a pattern sounded like a paradiddle groove or a double accent. I also learned albums by Queensrÿche, Led Zeppelin, the Police, the Beatles, James Brown…. I was in a serious band on the weekends; we played Foo Fighters kind of stuff. Before that I played in Dream Theater– and Rush-style cover bands. Learning the music of those bands is why I've connected with the progressive side of Periphery. I learned how to dissect rhythms and songs at a young age. I was recording instrumental music when I was seventeen.

MD: What did you woodshed while in high school?

Matt: I'd learn an entire album—Dave Matthews Band, Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains—and practice soloing. I'd watch videos by Dennis Chambers, Mike Mangini, Steve Smith, and Walfredo Reyes Jr. I tried to learn Dennis's singles technique, that sweep around the drums between his right hand and right foot. From Reyes I learned how to subdivide the left hand on the cowbell while playing a groove with the right side of my body. And I was never afraid to solo and perform.

MD: Why the simple setup of just bass drum, snare, and floor tom?

Matt: That began when I played in local bars and needed to get offstage fast. I enjoyed how easy it was—and how my performance improved. The smaller set gave me more room to move around. When you're touring, less is more. Because I had played in clubs on a small kit, I was comfortable with fewer toms and cymbals. I can perform all my music on this kit. In a live setting, if you don't have a roadie, it's hard. The smaller set allows people to see my emotions and my movements better as well.

MD: There are fills on mounted toms on the new album.

Matt: I used one mounted tom and two floors on the recording. And I had a bunch of cymbals. We wanted to get the tones and the vibes. For the upcoming shows, I may incorporate more into the set.

MATT'S SETUP

Drums: Mapex
A. 6½x14 Black Panther Sledgehammer snare
B. 16x16 Saturn birch/walnut floor tom
C. 18x22 Saturn birch/walnut bass drum

Heads: Evans Black Onyx snare batter (not shown) and clear 300 bottom, G2 tom batter and G1 bottom, and EMAD bass drum batter

Cymbals: Meinl
1. 14" Byzance Sand Hats
2. 19" Byzance Medium Thin crash
3. 18" Byzance Dark China/ 16" Byzance Thin crash stack
4. 22" Byzance Extra Dry ride
5. 18" Byzance Medium crash
6. 22" Byzance China

Hardware: Mapex, including Falcon double pedal

Sticks: Pro-Mark 5B

A Happy Band Makes a Happy Drummer

"Bandhappy came to be out of necessity," Matt Halpern says of the website he founded, which acts as an online marketplace for musicians who want to teach or take live lessons. "I needed to support myself financially as a touring musician, so I began teaching on tour as a way to supplement my income. On tour with Periphery, I teach students in every city we play, all over the world.

"When I started, I noticed a few things. Fans and students previously had no other way to sit down for thirty or sixty minutes and have a personal interaction with their favorite artist. In a music lesson, fans can ask questions, learn directly from the source, and build a deeper relationship with their favorite players, all rooted in education. It strengthens the bond between fans and musicians substantially, and that's great for both bands and fans."

When Halpern came off the road and continued his lessons with international students, including many touring musicians, via video chat, he found that the various platforms necessary to make his teaching business work—PayPal, email, Facebook, Skype—made the process time-consuming and cumbersome. The drummer's solution was to start Bandhappy.

"Whether the individual is an aspiring drummer wanting to learn from their favorite drummer, an up-and-coming business mind who wants to start a record label and wants guidance from a reputable manager, a school music teacher who wants to expand their after-school lesson roster or bring international artists into their classroom, or a touring musician who wants to connect on a deeper level with fans and supplement their income through teaching, Bandhappy offers those opportunities. We provide all of the scheduling, communication, payment, promotion, and lesson tools for students and teachers to connect live and in person, either via our custom live video-chat lesson platform or face to face when bands are on tour."

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MATT HALPERN

MD: On the "Improvised Grooves" video at Bandhappy.com, you play quick semi-rimclick patterns and use a fast glancing motion between the snare and floor tom.

Matt: The hand movement is left to right, right to left, left to right, right to left. That's Dennis Chambers' Baltimore sweep. He leads with his right hand: snare, floor, kick, kick; floor, snare, kick, kick. Then with his left hand: snare, floor, kick, kick; floor, snare, kick, kick. As you do it up to speed, the wrist movements become shorter between the two drums, creating a swaying motion, allowing you to go back and forth. It looks as if I'm lightly sweeping each drum, but I'm kind of bending my wrist both ways to hit the drums. Then filling in with your foot makes the motion more fluid.

Dennis did it as top, top, bottom, bottom. But you can also try top, bottom, top, bottom, or top, top, top, bottom. The trick is dynamics. If you're just playing drum fills, the dynamics don't matter because there isn't necessarily a backbeat to follow. But in "Improvised Grooves" I'm playing with a backbeat in mind. The fills mesh well with the bass drum because I'm hitting the floor tom at a lower volume to match the volume of the bass drum. And I'm playing ghost notes on the snare, so they can be more layered to match the bass drum. I'm not putting a lot of force into it. It's also the tone, or the ring, of the bass drum and snare mixing together that helps me move between the drums more easily and at a higher rate of speed.

MD: Your technique is so fluid, and your grip seems to change constantly. What does that give you?

Matt: It's all out of necessity, though it happened almost by accident. Playing so many styles of music—metal, where you have to be precise but you also have to hit very hard; rock, where you're beating the crap out of the drums; jazz, where you have to use a softer feel—it's about being comfortable with different dynamic ranges. So I don't try to play with one grip all the time; all the variables make my style unique.

My focus is to use a large spectrum of dynamics. If I let the stick fall from a high place and I want it to have a free range, I hold it very loosely.

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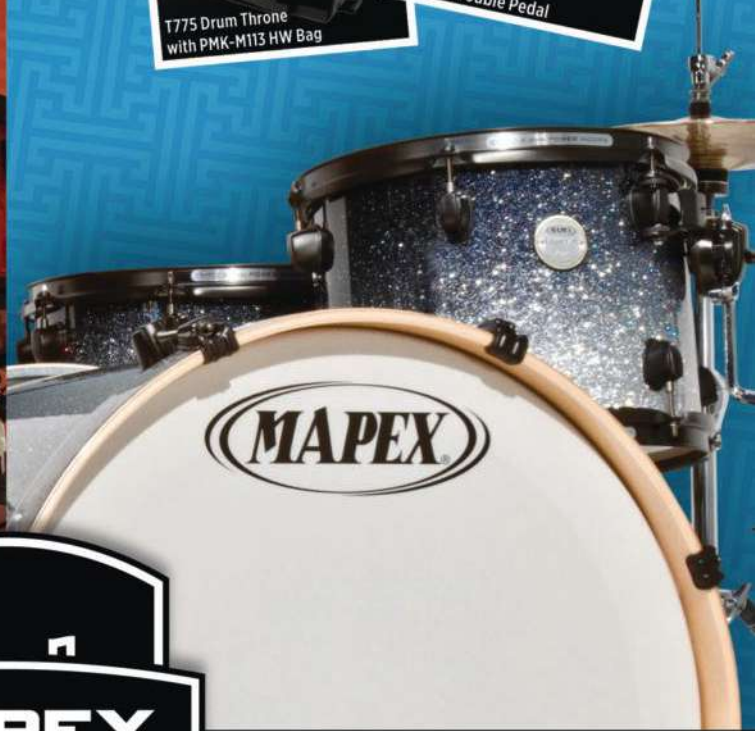

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MATT HALPERN

When I'm closer to the drum, I may hold the stick differently from the way I would when I'm farther away from the drum. When I'm playing a loud rimshot, I use more of a whipping motion, almost like a Moeller whip, and when I hit the snare drum I clench up and use an American grip. But when I'm playing ghost notes, it's more of a French grip, because I use fingers and a looser wrist bounce. When I'm playing the right hand on my hi-hat and accenting an 8th-note downbeat, I may use my shoulder to push it and have my hand in a French grip—it depends on the velocity [at which] I'm pushing the stick into the hi-hat.

MD: Do you use a click live?

Matt: Yes. I use a 16th-note click, because that way, whether I'm playing in four or five, it's very easy to count and feel the different changes and feels. Playing ghost notes is also a great way to feel the spaces between the larger quarter or 8th notes.

MD: You've explained before that you learned polyrhythms by singing them to yourself first. Did you approach other drumming principles by internalizing them?

Matt: Often I can't sleep because I have rhythms in my head or I'm grinding my teeth to create grooves with my mouth. I don't count them out first; it's a feel thing. Often I'll have an idea and tap it out with my hands. If I can tap out a full song on my steering wheel, then I can apply it to the drumset. With one hand on a table I can copy a bass drum and a snare drum and put it all together and make a groove. If you ask me to play a groove on a book, I can do that. Sometimes it's easier to learn something on a small scale.

MD: When recording, does Periphery grid everything? Do you do any live takes? And are you replicating Misha Mansoor's programmed drum parts?

Matt: On the new album we tracked everything separately with real drums and real amps. We wanted to do a full live album, not in terms of us recording live in a room together, but separately the performances are live.

Whoever writes the song usually has an idea for the drum part. Misha uses Toontrack's Superior Drummer to program a basic drumbeat. So he'll give me a full demo with a drum part and fills and groove ideas and sectional ideas that I then make my own. There are songs where I completely composed the drum ideas, and on other songs I embellished the other songwriter's ideas and made it my own feel. The final takes are me doing three or four passes and getting comfortable and then compiling a drum part from the best takes.

MD: So you assembled your drum parts.

Matt: I'd punch in and redo a section, or I'd redo the entire take to get a better feel. We didn't cut and paste drum parts in Pro Tools. "Mile Zero" was one take, start to finish. I hadn't played it before we recorded it. We did quantize the drums after that, lining them up on the grid. That's a big part of Periphery's sound, being very tight rhythmically.

MD: You're very precise, but your recordings sound like an actual drummer. Some progressive metal drummers sound too mechanical, too calculated. You sound natural.

Matt: That's a great compliment. Thank you. I hope that comes across. I recorded the first Periphery album on a V-Drums kit, then we edited the takes in Superior Drummer. So it's my feel, but with sounds from Superior Drummer. It was important this time to get all live drum tones. We wanted it to sound as natural as possible.

MD: Do you lock in your bass drum patterns with the bass guitar in a traditional sense?

Matt: The bass is all played, not programmed, and we lock. And we have three guitar players. Two play a rhythmic part, then the other will play a more melodic harmony or layer. On "Erised," I'm following the bass part in the first verse, but in the second verse I'm accenting the vocal lines. In other songs it's about being truly tight with the guitars and bass. That's a staple of our music.

MD: Are there multiple meters in "Make Total Destroy"?

Matt: It's all in four. If you listen to the downbeat of the cymbal, you'll hear that it's 8th notes all the time. But we

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play around with different rhythms to make it sound like we're playing with the feel.

MD: Periphery plays a lot of odd time signatures.

Matt: Watching Dream Theater rehearse on this latest tour we did with them, we'd see them messing around with twenty-six and eleven and nineteen. We like to incorporate those ideas into our music too, and we want it to be digestible so that the audience is always bobbing their heads. It's putting odd meters into a certain master rhythm.

MD: "Erised" has shades of Allan Holdsworth, as well as killer 32nd-note fills and a drum solo.

Matt: The solo was one pass. Nothing was planned; it was improvised. I like the randomness of it.

MD: What do you practice now?

Matt: I'm always working on creating new grooves. Mike Mangini can play with his left hand in one meter while his right hand and right foot are in another. Then he subdivides more meters between each limb. That's inspiring to me, so I'm working on that. I have an upcoming Meinl clinic that will include Benny Greb, Mike Johnston, and Hannes Grossmann, so I have to pull something out to hold my own. I'm conceptualizing a performance—there will be a start, a middle, excitement, peaks and valleys, and a finish. It's more event focused than technique focused.

MD: What do you do to maintain your technique?

Matt: For speed I'll play on pillows or work on wrist exercises. To practice subdividing hands and feet I work on different patterns where I don't need a drumset. I take a basic rudiment or pattern and apply it to each limb, then combine all that. I work on playing linear grooves with one hand. On airplanes I place my feet in front of me at a 90-degree angle, so they're flat. Then I pitch my heels as high as they'll go, so I'm flexing my calves. Then I simultaneously drop down the heels on both feet. I do that as fast as possible, for five minutes. After five minutes I move my feet back one inch and repeat. Doing that for forty minutes, you'll find that for every inch you go back, the harder the exercise becomes. That really builds power and agility. I always work on the feet together, because you never know when you'll need that.

MD: Some of your recent YouTube videos, such as "Improvised Grooves," are as informative as the Periphery records. One thing is obvious: You don't always rely on double pedal.

Matt: During high school I was in a band playing reggae, acoustic rock, and dance music, all of it on a simple kick, snare, hi-hat setup. I really worked on my single-kick technique to play a dynamic range. I practiced in live situations playing bass drum patterns alternately with my left and right foot. I never enjoyed practicing monotonous things like RRRRRR, LLLLLL. I'd do it live in front of an audience. That forces you to get it right. You have to figure it out, and you can't screw up.

MD: You didn't drill *Stick Control* with a metronome?

Matt: No. I'd always play songs or albums or work on freeform soloing, as opposed to reading a chart or working with a metronome. I work out ideas in front of an audience. I'll think about what I want to play, then I'll go for it. If I nail it in a high-pressure situation, that proves I can do it at any time. Then I go back and work on it. By improvising I come up with things that I can use in songs.

MD: That's risk taking.

Matt: I was talking to Mike Mangini about this. He spends a lot of time practicing, but he really implements it in front of an audience. Now, I wouldn't try to play a really crazy Horacio Hernandez left-foot-clave solo in front of an audience. I don't go off on a tangent and throw people off. It has to pertain to what I'm doing. But if you have a way to accent a brand-new rhythm that incorporates some of the things you've worked on but isn't run of the mill, then go for it. If it steps on the band or confuses the audience, don't do it. I improvise where it's appropriate. But the best drummers are risk takers; you have to take the risks to get the rewards.

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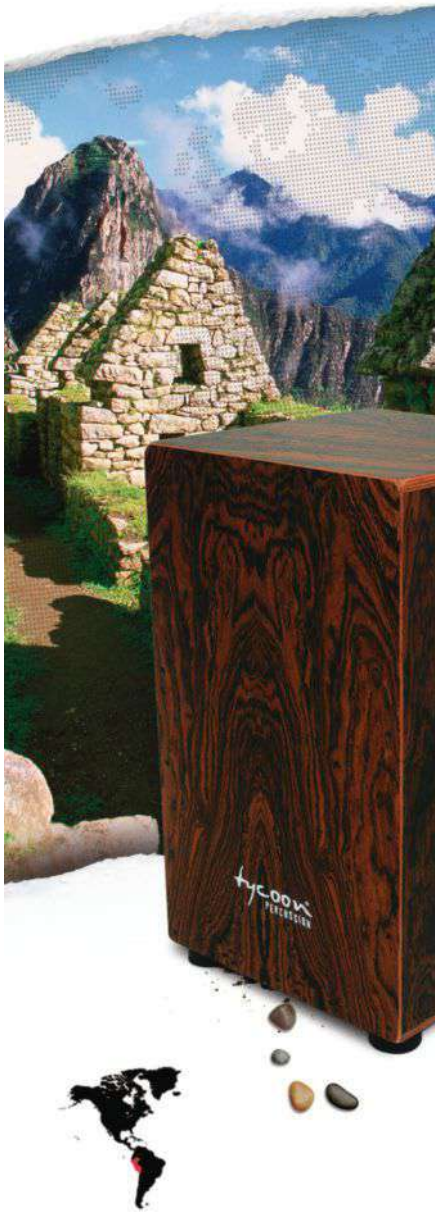

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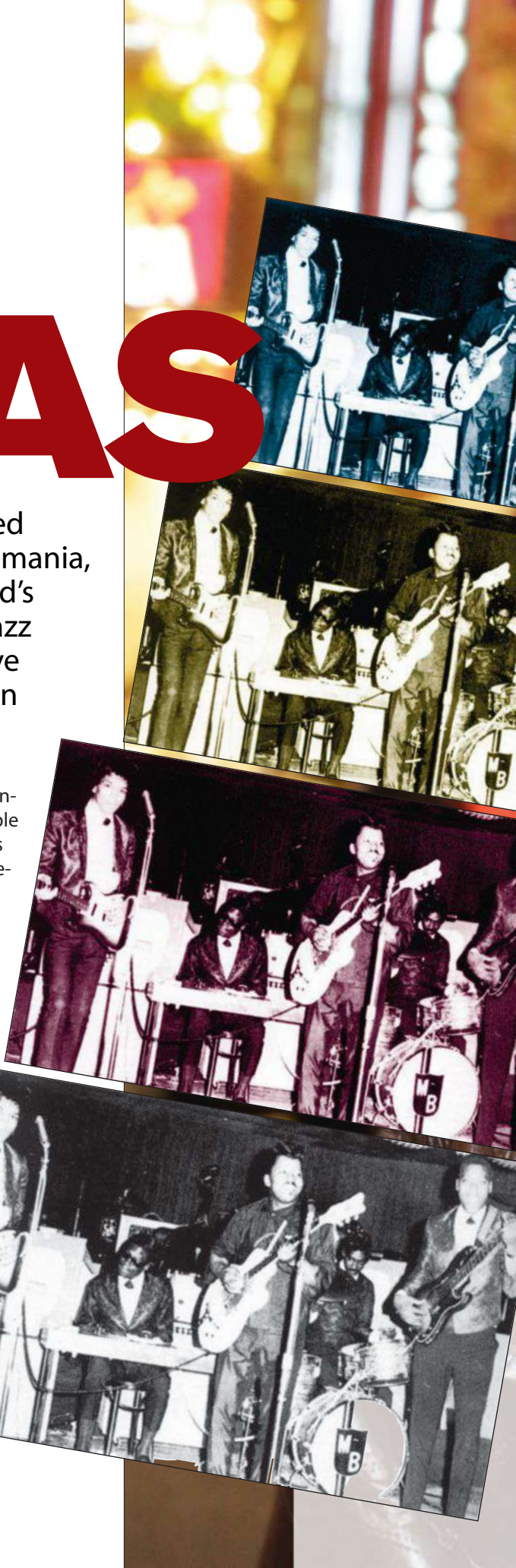
RAY LUCAS

He jammed regularly with Hendrix, shared stages with Ringo at the height of Beatlemania, and set a standard that some of the world's greatest players aspired to. Noted R&B/jazz expert **Jim Payne** tracks down the elusive groove pioneer and captures an era when sophisticated soul ruled.



Ray Lucas is an unsung drum hero who made significant contributions to the history of R&B, jazz, and funk. His incredible touch and time feel inspire even bona fide groove masters like Bernard Purdie to describe him as nothing short of phenomenal. "Ray had great time and a superb touch," Purdie says. "He was like an acrobat—so light on his feet. He danced on the pedals. He could take sticks and make them sound like brushes. He could be the quietest person in the world and be in the groove, and when he had to be fatback, he had no problem. And he had no problem swinging either."

Lucas was an important part of New York City's dynamic soul and R&B scene in the '60s and '70s, appearing on record with legends like Aretha Franklin, Roberta Flack, Jimi Hendrix, and George Benson. But he's never gotten the credit he's owed or even had his story told. This is partially due to the fact that after a ten-year stint with Dionne Warwick, Ray suddenly dropped out of the music scene. In fact, I'd wanted to include him in my book *Give the Drummers Some!* back in 1996, but I couldn't locate him. Turns out Lucas was alive and well and living in New York City, the town of his birth. He just likes his privacy. But we finally connected, and he consented to an interview. We spoke on a park bench on Amsterdam Avenue on the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

Paul La Raia

MD: How did you get started with the drums?

Ray: I was playing when I was in high school. I heard Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Big Sid Catlett, and the rhythm sections of Count Basie, especially with Sonny Payne on drums, Walter Page on bass, and Freddie Green on guitar. At that time you had to play everything: calypso, jazz, Spanish music, polka, bar mitzvahs—whatever. The way I look at it, that education was perfect, just as if I went to music school. There are some things you can learn that a school could never teach. So that was pretty much my education in music, and it never stops.

MD: Did you woodshed?

Ray: I used to do that all the time. I played paradiddles and all that, mainly on my own. After a while I got to the point where everything was in really good control. You can't force it. You've got to relax and let your fingers do it. The best thing that ever happened to me was I learned to listen.

"There are a lot of well-trained musicians, but I realized that it goes both ways. I had something that they didn't have.Otherwise I wouldn't have been there."

My thing was, you play the record one time, I got it.

MD: How did you first get in the King Curtis band?

Ray: I was still in high school when I heard "Yakety Yak" by the Coasters, with King Curtis on sax. At that time I was playing bebop and jazz. I didn't care nothin' about rock 'n' roll. I was born and raised in Harlem. All I knew was New York and bebop. If you didn't know Blue Mitchell, Miles Davis, Dexter Gordon, you weren't in my league. But Curtis had a unique style of playing, and when I heard him on that Coasters record, I was knocked out.

Eric Gale, the guitar player, was the one who got me the audition with King Curtis. It was downstairs in the basement of Small's Paradise. It was King Curtis, me, and Roy Haynes. He had Roy come in to check me out to see if I was all right. No piano, no bass, no organ, no guitar—just Curtis on sax and me on drums.

The most important thing about being a drummer is listening. If he played the melody, I had to hear that *and* what the rhythm section would play. You've got to be able to do your own thing by yourself with just the melody. I had heard his band, so he could play any tune he wanted and I pretty much knew it.

Afterwards Roy looked at Curtis and said, "That's a good kid. He's all right." I was nineteen or twenty at the time. I played with Curtis from 1961 to 1966, and that was the best band I was ever in.

When I came in the band it was Al Casey on guitar, Jimmy Lewis on bass, and Paul Griffin on piano. Now and then Curtis would augment it, but that was the basic band. Man, could he cover some ground. And that's when you're good—when you can make it sound bigger than you are. We recorded "Soul Twist" in 1962, and that became a number-one R&B hit. It was a half-time shuffle with a backbeat.

Later Chuck Rainey came into the band on bass. What a lot of bass players are doing now, he did forty years ago. Then Cornell Dupree came in on guitar [see this month's Backbeats for more on Dupree] and George Stubbs on piano.

MD: You played a lot at Small's Paradise. What was that like?

Ray: When we played there, the people that came in, they never left. They were moved. When we came on that stand, we took care of business. Even the most non-musical person couldn't leave that table without shaking back and forth a little bit. I thought that was heaven. It couldn't get any better than that. We always had a good audience. [Comedian] Redd Foxx would come in. He was the funniest dude. He'd look at me and say, "Look, there's God on the drums!"

Every now and then we'd do something like a Clifford Brown tune, and I'd have to take a solo like Max Roach, in that style. Curtis knew I liked Basie, so sometimes we'd do "One O'Clock Jump" or "Jumpin' at the Woodside." You had to play different styles of music in the types of clubs we were working in. You worked in the club to please the boss and the audience.

MD: When King Curtis played the Apollo Theater, he'd use the Apollo horns but his own rhythm section, and you would also back up the other acts on the shows, like Otis Redding, Little Willie John, the Coasters, the Falcons with Wilson Pickett, the Supremes…. Tell us about playing at the Apollo.

Ray: The Apollo Theater will always be my Carnegie Hall. When I think of the people who stood on that stage—Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Big Joe Turner, Ella Fitzgerald, Art Blakey—that's where the best played, as far as contemporary rhythm and blues and jazz was concerned. I got out of high school but didn't go to college, and I was on the same stage as them. That was special.

During the week it was five shows a day. Saturday and Sunday it was six shows. I was making $129 a week. After we got through at the Apollo, sometimes we had to go play a dance at the Audubon Ballroom. We also traveled a lot, all up and down the East Coast. We went on the road with the Supremes, Patti LaBelle, the Coasters. One time we drove from New York to Columbia, South Carolina, for a one-nighter. When you're young you can do anything. I didn't care. As long as I was playing.

MD: The King Curtis band opened for the Beatles on their second U.S. tour. What was it like playing on a bill with the Beatles?

Ray: It started at Shea Stadium. We played some of Curtis's tunes and backed up some other acts from the States that were opening up the show. We really didn't have to be there. We just added more excitement to the fact that they were coming.

Ringo and I had never met, but we had the exact same drumkit, Ludwigs, oyster-gray pearl. He's lookin' at me and I'm lookin' at him…. [laughs] We spoke a few times. On the first two or three days we all rode on the same plane. After that they had their own plane and we had ours.

When they checked into a hotel they had three floors. They were in the middle, and they had security above and below. And every day it was a mob. I'd never seen anything like that. People just wanted to be around the Beatles. They were magic.

At the Cow Palace, there were 55,000 people in front of the stage. They were sold out everywhere, all the biggest places. The crowd was always screaming. You couldn't even hear their singing! After that tour was over, we had to sign a waiver. We couldn't associate ourselves with the Beatles at all. We couldn't even have a marquee outside

Recordings

King Curtis Soul Twist, Soul Serenade, Plays Hits Made by Sam Cooke, Live at Small's Paradise /// **Various artists** Apollo Saturday Night /// **Mongo Santamaria** Watermelon Man /// **Illinois Jacquet** Desert Winds /// **Bobby Timmons** Workin' Out /// **George Benson** It's Uptown, The George Benson Cookbook /// **Hubert Laws** The Laws of Jazz /// **Freddie Roach** The Freddie Roach Soul Book /// **Brother Jack McDuff** Do It Now! /// **Curtis Knight with Jimi Hendrix** The Summer of Love Sessions /// **Junior Mance** Harlem Lullaby /// **Stanley Turrentine** Common Touch /// **Roberta Flack** First Take, Chapter Two /// **Aretha Franklin** Spirit in the Dark; Young, Gifted and Black /// **Charlie Mariano** Mirror /// **David "Fathead" Newman** Lonely Avenue /// **Bette Midler** The Divine Miss M /// **Donny Hathaway** Extension of a Man /// **Ray Sharpe and the King Curtis Orchestra with Jimi Hendrix** "Help Me (Get the Feeling)" parts I and II /// **King Curtis & the Kingpins with Jimi Hendrix** "Instant Groove"

a club that said, "Just back from a tour with the Beatles."

MD: King Curtis always had a featured singer or player. After the Beatles tour, he added Jimi Hendrix, who'd worked with Little Richard and the Isley Brothers, among others.

Ray: Jimi Hendrix, man, you're talking about one of the nicest guys. He was so kind and courteous. He played with his teeth and all that, but he could play. Jimi would play Curtis's tunes and then do some of his own. He would sing more or less down-home blues, rather than the psychedelic things he got into later. We were doing mainly contemporary tunes. He stayed with us for about six months, and then he went on his own.

Jimi and I used to play together in the studio, just me and him. He'd try all kinds of different things. He'd plug into the Leslie speaker from the organ. I'd play a backbeat or a shuffle or whatever. This went on for maybe two or three weeks. It was a studio on 54th Street. That's how he built his recordings. I never heard any of the final versions.

One day a little later I ran into Jimi on the street downtown. He said, "Hey, Ray, what are you doing?" I said I was in between gigs. He said, "Man, I got my passport and my papers from the State Department. I've been trying to do my thing here, but it's not working out that great. I just got an offer from England. If you want to do it, I can get the finances together. Do you want to come with me?" Of all the drummers he knew, he asked me. I told him I couldn't do it, and in less than two years he was the biggest thing out there.

MD: In April of 1966, King Curtis broke up his band.

Ray: When Aretha came on the scene and Curtis started working more with her, he decided to dissolve the band and change things around. I thought the world was over. But I didn't fit. It had nothing to do with my drumming. There are certain things some drummers do and certain things other drummers do. I felt bad. But when I look back on it, it was the same thing as when I came in the band and replaced Belton Evans. I was the young upstart drummer then.

MD: Around this time you were doing a lot of studio work.

Ray: Cool ain't nothin' when you go in the studio. When you go in the studio you've got to know how to make things work. You've got to find the part that works for the song, and you have to set the *pace* of the song. Without that it's just

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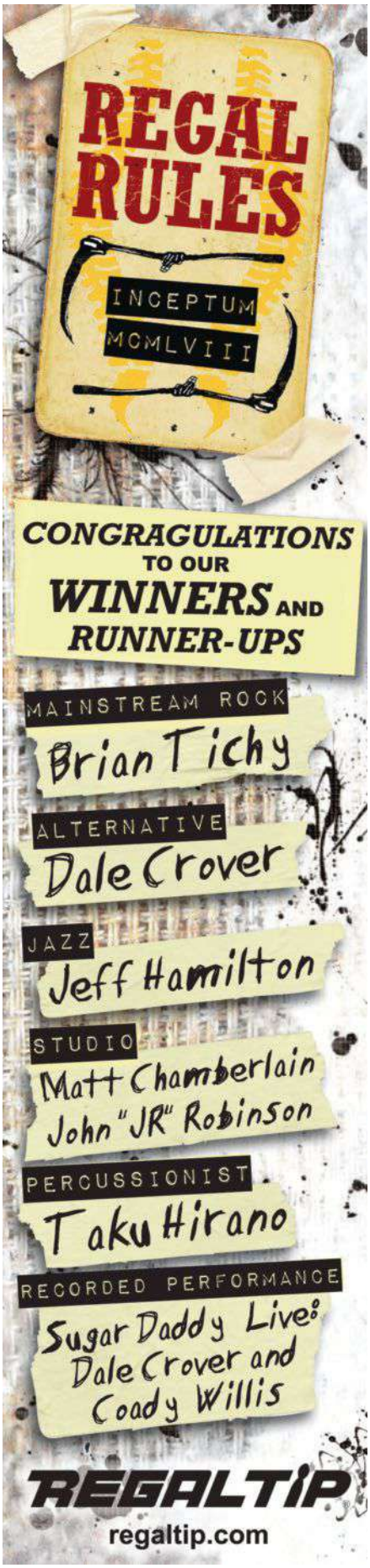


a bland song. [Lucas looks at a list of his recordings.] Honestly, I forgot how many things I played on. I just played and went on the next session. When I look at this list I really can't believe it. I was lucky. I had a chance to work with some of the best musicians. So if my landlord gets on me for not paying the rent, I should show him this list, right? [laughs]

MD: How did you get involved with Dionne Warwick?

Ray: The guys wanted to keep me in New York to do studio work, but I always preferred playing in a live situation. The opportunity came up, and the money was good, so I went with Dionne Warwick. She was looking for a drummer, and I had always admired her singing.

MD: She was doing the music of Burt Bacharach at this point?

Ray: Yeah. Now, that's something I thought I could never do: play 2/4, 3/4, 6/8, all in one song. And there I was in Lincoln Center with Dionne. It was a full hall. I can't read an iota of music, and all these symphony musicians were there with the conductor, and everybody was looking at the music. But I *knew* the music.

I always thought that you don't have to go to one of these great conservatories and say you studied with so-and-so to be a good musician. There are a lot of fine, educated, well-trained musicians, but I didn't do that. That's when I realized that it goes both ways. I had something that they didn't have. Otherwise I wouldn't have been there. If you had any sense—which I thought I had—you'd just shut up and listen. That's all I had to do. I worked with Dionne for ten years before I stopped playing.

MD: Why did you decide to leave the business?

Ray: The music changed. I couldn't stay with the disco. Some of it was good, but you can't change everything. I'm not against it, but it wasn't my taste. You have to be who you are. I always wanted to share something with the people I was playing with. But if you want to say, "This is how it's got to be done," then get somebody else. I didn't want to jive around with something that had been so good to me. Either you do it or you don't.

MD: What do you think was the secret to your success?

Ray: Being with good musicians. And I'm not talking about name musicians. I'm talking about listening to good musicians and being very conscious of what they're doing.

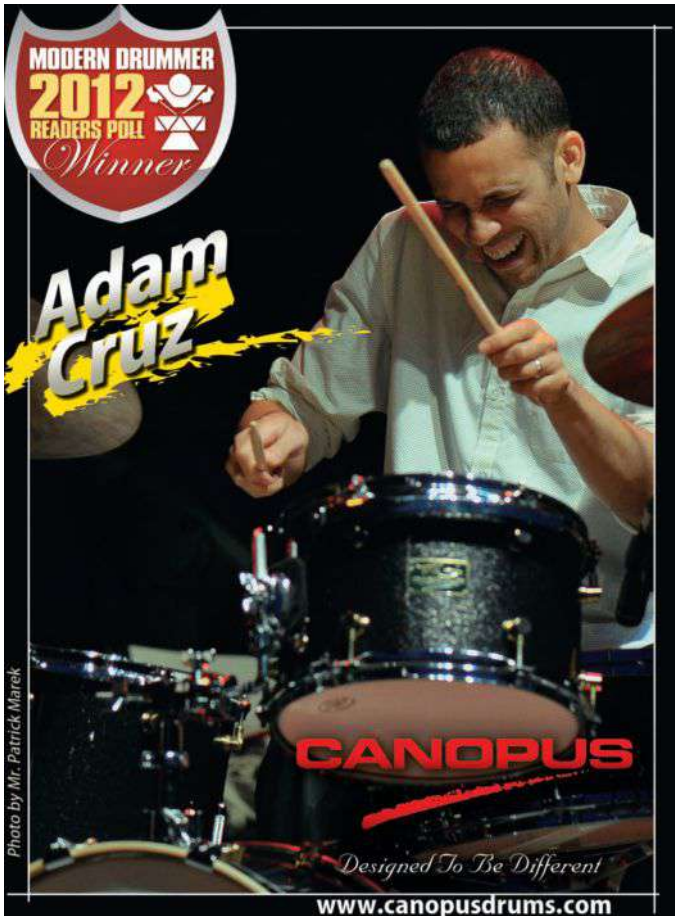
Ahmad Jamal once told me, "If you got sense enough to listen to what somebody else is saying, hold your peace and cool it. Most people listen, but they don't really get into what the other person is saying."

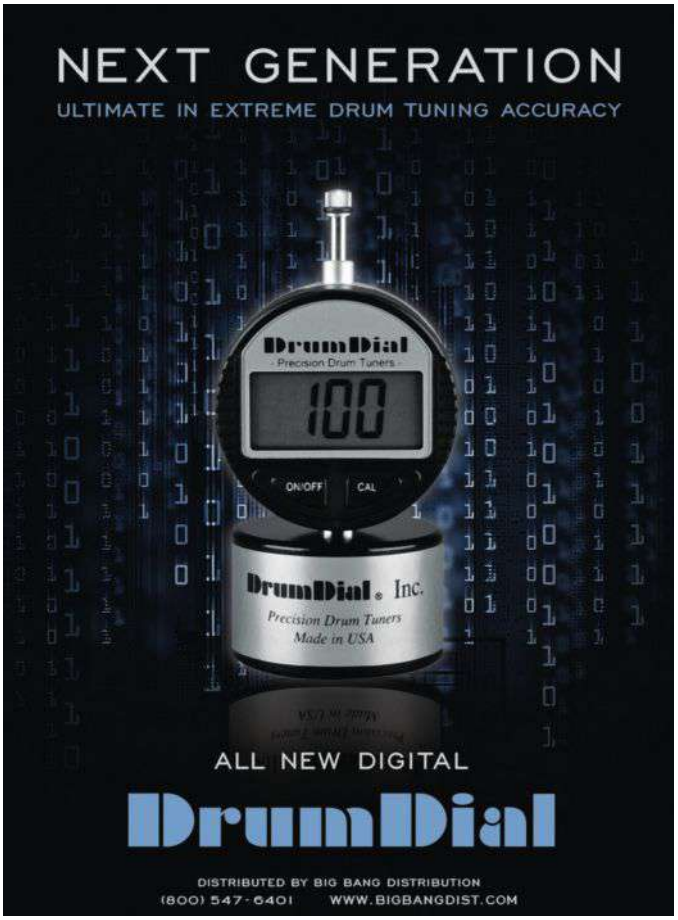
I've been lucky. I played with some great musicians. I was a part of that. Miles Davis was the best-paid jazz musician in the world, but he still wasn't happy. He wanted an audience like Jimi Hendrix's. With me, if the music's good, that's good enough for me. There's nothing like playing in a good live band.

I've got a friend, and every time I see him he says, "Boy, I sure would like to have a million dollars." I say, "Don't you look in the mirror? Look in the mirror, man—that's the only million you're gonna get." We take so much for granted. That's how I feel. And then on top of that I was able to be a musician? I'm cool. I'm seventy-two years old, and it's not over yet. Maybe next week I'll be playing again.

For more on Ray Lucas, go to moderndrummer.com.

Jim Payne has played with Maceo Parker and the J.B. Horns and has produced records for Medeski Martin & Wood. He teaches funk and R&B drums online for the Berklee College of Music, and his book/DVD *Advanced Funk Drumming* is available from Modern Drummer Publications.





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STEPHEN PERKINS: Rolling Thunder

His eternal smile and energy are impossible to forget, and whether he's playing just a shaker and a pair of bongos or bashing home the finale of one of Jane's Addiction's more heady epics, his drive and feel are inspirational.

When Stephen Perkins made his recording debut on Jane's Addiction's self-titled 1987 album, he brought a highly distinctive style utilizing elements of punk, funk, world music, and arena rock. His approach continued to evolve on the next two Jane's albums, as well as in his work with Infectious Grooves, Porno for Pyros, and his own Banyan collective.

Perkins started playing at eight years old and bought his first real drumkit in 1980 with bar mitzvah money. Most of the standard drummer rites of passage followed: Stephen took private lessons, with Jim Engle of the Pro Drum Shop in Hollywood, who helped instill a strong work ethic; his cousin Joel Gallant was also a drummer and hipped him to Max Roach, Art Blakey, and Elvin Jones; and he played in his high school drum line, with future bandmate Dave Navarro. Perkins absorbed the sounds of classic rockers like John Bonham, Keith Moon, and Mitch Mitchell, the punk energy of Earl Hudson of Bad Brains, and seemingly every other type of drum influence he encountered. Over the course of his career Perkins has amassed a houseful of percussion instruments from his travels, and he remains a voracious listener of music from all over the planet.

Like many fans of Stephen Perkins, Red Hot Chili Peppers drummer Chad Smith is drawn to his full-kit approach. "Perks' rolling bombastic tribal feel is what propels Jane's," Smith insists. "It's as simple as that."

For many, Jane's Addiction's early performances were a religious experience. Examining a set list from a 1991 Lollapalooza show reveals the breadth of feels that Perkins pulled off night after night, guiding the roller-coaster ride that was a Jane's show. There's the expansive, rolling triplet feel of the mostly instrumental opener "Up the Beach," the rocking two-handed ride work of "Whores," the 16th-note funk workout "Standing in the Shower…Thinking," and the tribal tom pummeling of "Ain't No Right." Meanwhile, slower numbers like "Up the Beach" and "Summertime Rolls" showcase the roundness in Perkins' time; like Black Sabbath's Bill Ward and Led Zeppelin's John Bonham, Stephen rocked out but still had a swing to his playing.

While the inaugural Lollapalooza tour of 1991 was supposed to be Jane's Addiction's farewell trek, Perkins didn't remain idle for long after the bus dropped him off in L.A., joining the Suicidal Tendencies offshoot Infectious Grooves. In fact, for a brief period you could catch him funkifying the band's collaboration with Ozzy Osbourne, "Therapy," on MTV's *Headbangers Ball*, and then see him channeling Earl Hudson on "Punk It Up" on *120 Minutes*.

Perkins' drumming approach can be likened to that of Keith Moon or Elvin Jones; he focuses on the entire kit in a very unified way, giving equal attention to all of the components. In 1992 he began working in a new project, Porno for Pyros, with Jane's frontman Perry Farrell, and in this setting he furthered his concept by incorporating the timbales, bongos, blocks, bells, and timpani that he'd added to his setup. Perkins' innovative style can be seen in the video for the hit song "Pets," where he rides quarter notes with his left hand on a timbalito while playing a steady backbeat between his signature cracking snare and a very wide-open kick drum.

Another example of Perkins' multi-timbral approach is his kitchen-sink pattern on the verse of "Packin' .25." Listen carefully and you can pick out cup chimes, blocks, bells, splash cymbals, and a descending timpani glissando played with sticks. The chorus follows with a go-go-like bongo funk figure that you'd assume is the product of overdubs—but Perkins is playing the groove in one pass.

Stephen's' long-running Banyan project, which features the legendary Minutemen bassist Mike Watt, Wilco guitar genius Nels Cline, and trumpeter Willie Waldman, provides a more experimental setting for the drummer's signature rolling momentum. A YouTube search finds the band tearing through original freak-funk assaults like "Oh My People" from the album *Live at Perkins' Palace*, as well as a fiery reading of Funkadelic's cosmic blues classic "Maggot Brain."

No matter what project he's focusing on at any given time, Perkins has always been up for the chance to contribute to the music of his peers, and he's tracked drums or percussion with No Doubt, Peter Murphy, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Broadcast, Rage Against the Machine, Nine Inch Nails, and Tommy Lee's Methods of Mayhem. But the opportunity to reconvene with his mates in Jane's Addiction is always something he's made room for. The group staged a comeback tour in 1997 and again in 2001, after which it released the album *Strays*. The reunion didn't stick, though, and in 2004 Perkins and Dave Navarro started the group Panic Channel. Jane's did reunite once again, however, in 2008, and in 2011 the band released *The Great Escape Artist*, which it's been touring behind.

As Perkins once said in an *MD* interview, drums are "for anyone who can get enjoyment or healing or spiritual power from them," and he's taken this sentiment to heart by facilitating drum circles for disabled children and co-designing the LP Go-Jo Bag mutable shaker, which is intended for use by music therapists and percussionists in general. In a sense, such activities are really just an extension of Perkins' inclusive worldview, which is always defined by his ability to feature as many styles and sounds as his playing can accommodate. It's perhaps this sense of inclusion and exploration that best defines Stephen's contribution to modern drumming.

Stephen Bidwell

Paul Griffin

The CRASH Course to Success

Part 3: Attitude

by Rich Redmond

This article focuses on the third portion of my CRASH concept ("commitment, relationships, attitude, skill, hunger") for attracting success to your drumming career—and that's *attitude.*

Attitude is everything in life. It will make or break just about anyone on any career track, but especially musicians. Music is about communicating on a deep, almost telepathic or even spiritual level. I don't know anyone who wants to communicate, even superficially, with a person who oozes negativity. As a drummer, you can spend years developing flawless technique, speed, and power yet never share the stage with other musicians because you have a horrible attitude. Conversely, if you make it to the big stage, a bad attitude can take away that privilege just as fast.

THINK POSITIVE

Did you know that it takes almost twice as much energy to generate a negative thought as it does to create a positive one? Why work so hard? Develop the habit of staying positive, and let your team-player spirit shine through. People will be attracted to your energy, and you'll be able to pursue your purpose in life every day.

I was attracted to the idea of positive thinking at a young age. My mother collected books by authors like Napoleon Hill, Zig Ziglar, Leo Buscaglia, and Tony Robbins, who've written about the power of the mind and how our thoughts can become reality. She encouraged me to absorb this material, and absorb I did—like a sponge. I'm so grateful to her for that encouragement. (Thanks, Mom!) "Change your mind, change your life" is a fantastic thought process that I've brought to my drumming career, with great results.

I believe people from all walks of life are subliminally attracted to those who have a great attitude. You can set yourself apart from the pack by wielding a winning attitude like a sword. There are many drummers across the globe who share skill sets. They may all have great gear, be able to read music, have knowledge of song structures, and be versatile enough to cover many styles, program loops, play comfortably with a click, and overdub percussion. These are expected skill sets for the city I live in—Nashville—and the music scene I work in. Not all drummers, however, have that winning attitude that people want to surround themselves with time and time again. The ones who have it work all the time.

Focus on giving more than receiving, and the phone will ring off the hook.

ATTITUDE IN ACTION

Here's an example of how having a positive attitude can help your career. A top-notch-producer friend called me a few years back to record drums with a band. My friend wanted to get complete takes, like they did in the old Motown days. There would be less sonic scrubbing and no "we'll fix it in the mix" with this project. He wanted the full rhythm section to get keeper performances, and he knew that not all drummers would have the patience for this type of approach. He knew from hiring me in the past that I would be able to keep the energy level up and maintain a positive mental attitude for one or fifteen takes. So there you go: I got hired because of my team spirit and winning attitude.

My job is to serve the music, lift up the songs, drive the band, and inspire the artist to perform at his or her best. I'm willing to do anything to make that happen—show up early, stay late, take direction, offer suggestions.... It's important to be open and always play from the heart ("Play from the heart—it will set you apart.") And I do it all with a smile on my face. Hopefully my employers notice this and will want to call me again. Focus on giving more than receiving, and the phone will ring off the hook.

Remember, your playing may get you in the door, but it's your attitude that will keep you there. Your attitude is the thing most people will remember about you, more than any of your other traits. A great attitude means you must be open to suggestions. You have to be willing to change time signatures, forms, beats, subdivisions, grooves, fills, colors, and textures on the fly. This rule applies whether you're working for an artist or band, live or in the studio. If the producer wants you to use mallets on the toms, play a rivet cymbal with brushes, or tap a light backbeat on the underside of a snare drum, do it! Don't make the mistake of being negative or closed off to suggestions.

I've witnessed situations where a paid musician is difficult to work with. The whole gig becomes uncomfortable, and that musician is never called again. Over time, that person might develop an unfavorable reputation.

Reputation is vitally important, so why jeopardize that? I've been at recording sessions where the morale has slipped and the negativity has hung so thick in the air that you could cut it with a knife. When that happens, you can ease the tension with a joke or by expressing how excited you are to be there and be part of the project. A positive attitude is contagious.

In this fast-paced world, you have to run just to stand still. This means you need to consistently go above and beyond expectations and deliver the goods with a smile on your face. Many people talk about vibes. How many times have you heard "The vibe in that room is way off" or "Man, that dude has a really dark vibe"? It happens all the time. All people can sense and feel when someone is thinking negative thoughts. It's called intuition. It's been proven that negative thought patterns actually manifest themselves in a molecular way. That's why it's so important to stay positive.

Here's another example of attitude in action. I work with my 3 Kings rhythm section at the same studio in Nashville 90 percent of the time. Recently the studio manager pulled us aside and told us he loved having us around because there's always positive energy in the building when we work there. We let our attitudes show. As a result, we attract other like-minded people to the studio, who end up booking more sessions. That's a great scenario for a studio owner!

BE GREAT

We couldn't have a conversation about attitude without discussing some of the kick-butt drummers. I immediately think of Gene Krupa, John Bonham, Tony Williams, Carmine Appice, Kenny Aronoff, Tommy Lee, Alex Van Halen, and Dave Grohl, among many others. We're not talking about ego or arrogance here. I'm referring to an utter confidence in their playing and their approach that lights a fire of inspiration in the musicians who play with them.

There's tremendous power in playing with attitude. Drumming is the way I express myself spiritually and physically. It's the physical manifestation of who I am as a person. I notice that as soon as I get near my expression zone—a drumset—I assume a certain attitude. I know that I was put here to play drums. I own every second of it, from the click of my sticks for the first count-off to the very last cymbal blow. I'm performing from the first moment I step on stage, and I'm performing with attitude. I strive to always maintain that confidence, while being open to musical and verbal suggestions from my fellow musicians.

Attitude rocks, so let yours shine. See you next time!

Rich Redmond is a Nashville-based touring/recording drummer with the multiplatinum country rocker Jason Aldean. He has also worked with Kelly Clarkson, Bryan Adams, Jewel, Ludacris, Lit, Joe Perry, Miranda Lambert, Steel Magnolia, Thompson Square, Rushlow, and others. For more info, visit richredmond.com.

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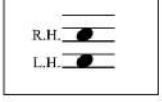
Polyrhythmic Coordination

Part 1: One- and Two-Note Base Rhythms

by Ari Hoenig

MUSIC KEY



All drummers have moments when we want to practice but aren't able to, whether it's due to sustaining an injury, having an uptight neighbor, or losing our drumset in a hand of poker. Over years of drumming, I've relied on mental practice to be a big part of my development. In fact, there are many things that are easier to learn away from the drumset.

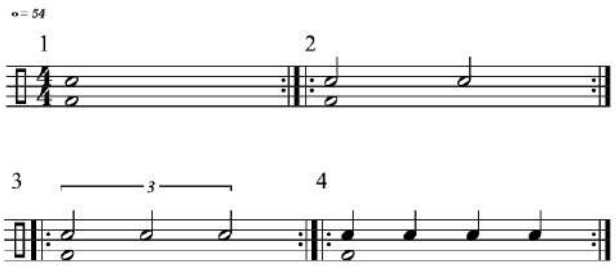
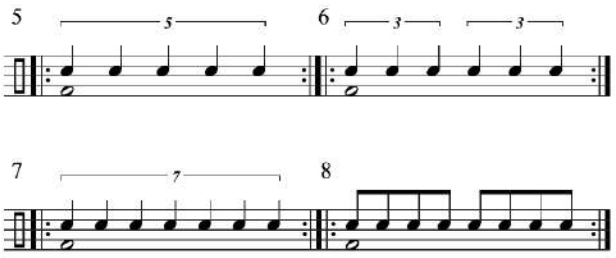
One idea for mental practice is to teach yourself to hear rhythms that you couldn't hear before. Remember, the idea is to expand your vocabulary—not to annoy your bandmates with fancy licks. What you can hear and understand is more important than what you can play. Once you can feel these rhythms comfortably, they will come out in your playing, hopefully in a musical way.

Rhythm and time are two of the best things to practice away from the drumset. The exercises in this article were originally written for a friend who'd been in an accident. Although he really wanted to practice, he physically couldn't do it because he had multiple fractured bones. He could, however, tap his hands in his lap.

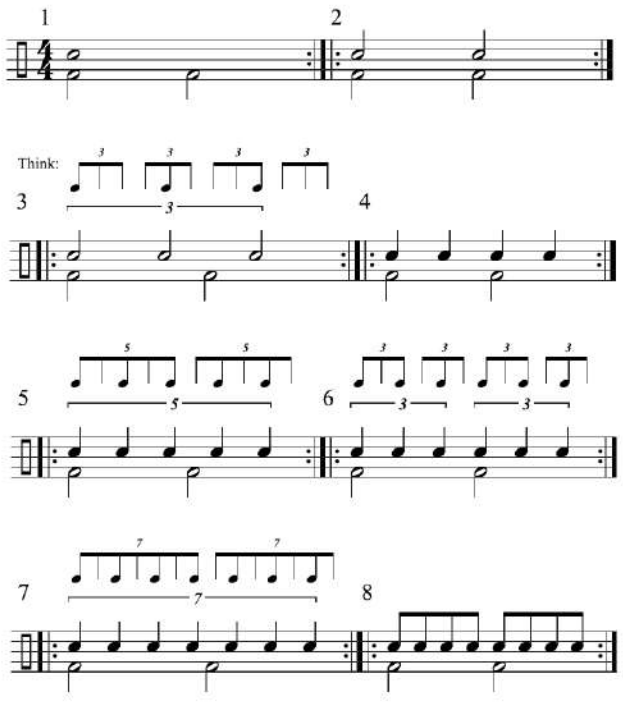
What I'm striving for with these exercises is the ability to place one to eight notes evenly in a measure while playing one to eight notes over that with a different limb or limbs. It may sound easy, but the patterns are very difficult to perform correctly.

We'll start with the left hand playing base rhythm 1 (whole note). Think of the base rhythm as the time signature. Play each bar at least four times before you move on. We'll start with one bar equaling 54 bpm (whole note = 54). The left hand is the bottom line, and the right hand is the top line.

When you've reached eight notes per bar, go backward from eight to one. Make sure to line up the notes with the metronome. If it's done correctly, this will likely be some of the most concentrated, and possibly the most tiring, practicing you will ever do.



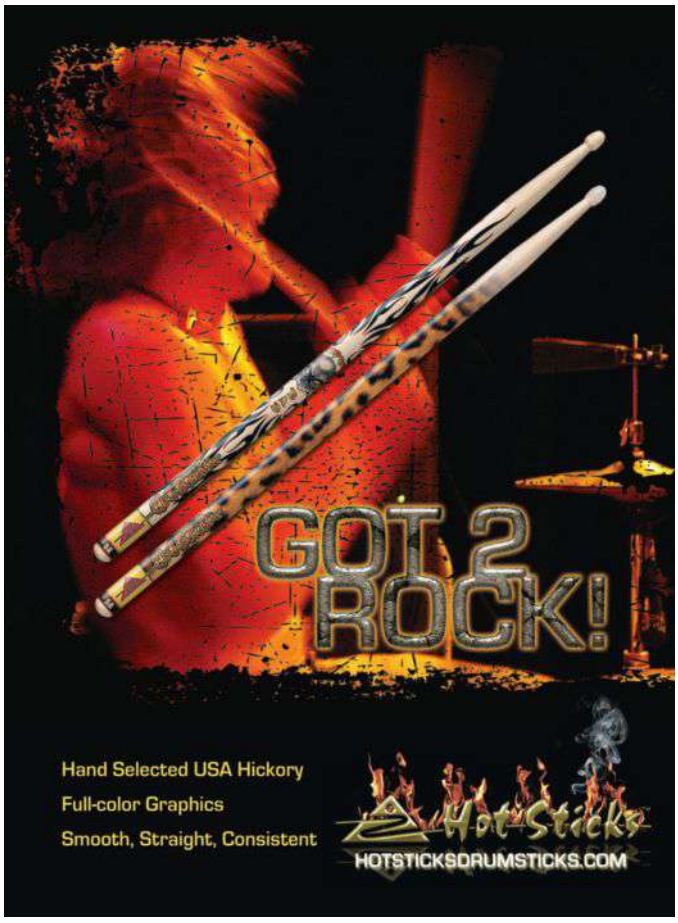
Now change the left hand to base rhythm 2 (half notes). If you think of the subdivision, which is notated above the staff, it will be easier to match the left and right hands accurately. If you find that any of the transitions are awkward—between four and five notes, for example—go back and forth between the two for a while before moving on. An entire practice session could consist of just trying to master the transition between those two subdivisions.

When working on the quintuplets (five notes per measure), remember that the second note of the left hand falls exactly between beats 3 and 4 of the right. With septuplets, the second note of the left hand falls exactly between beats 4 and 5 of the right hand. There are many of these types of relationships, so it's important to take note of them when you find them.

After you've practiced these exercises forward and backward, try jumping randomly from one subdivision to another while still keeping the four-bar form. Also try counting out loud, first along with your left hand and then with your right. Then try going back and forth between the two. You should also switch the hands so that you play the base rhythm with your right hand.

These exercises are meant to bring improvement technically before they can do so musically. Don't be in a rush to apply any of this material during a gig. Always use a metronome, or play along to a recording, and feel free to vary the tempo. I like to use a different tempo each day.

Next time we'll move on to using three and four notes per measure as the base rhythms.

Ari Hoenig is a New York–based drummer/composer/bandleader and a faculty member at New York University and the New School in Manhattan. He recently released a quartet album (*Lines of Oppression*), a method book (*Systems*), and an educational video (*Melodic Drumming*), all of which are available at arihoenig.com.



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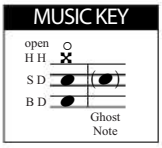
Popular Play-Alongs

Part 1: Timber Grooves

by Donny Gruendler

MODERN DRUMMER DIGITALLY ENHANCED



Pop music is all over the airwaves. Drummers need to realize that the music on the radio is vital and deserves our attention as aspiring working musicians. Today's radio hits will be tomorrow's standards and will likely show up on our future gigs.

This five-part play-along series is designed to help you understand popular song forms, rhythmic figures, transitions, and drumset sounds. Practicing these songs will not only expand your groove vocabulary and widen your feel but will also increase your odds of getting work. You can download the play-along MP3s (with and without drums) and charts at moderndrummer.com.

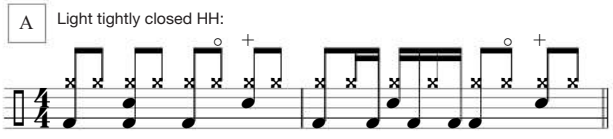
GENRE: TOP 40

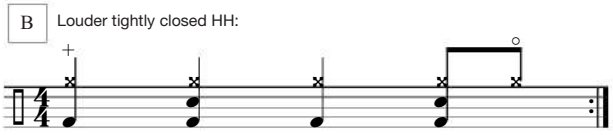
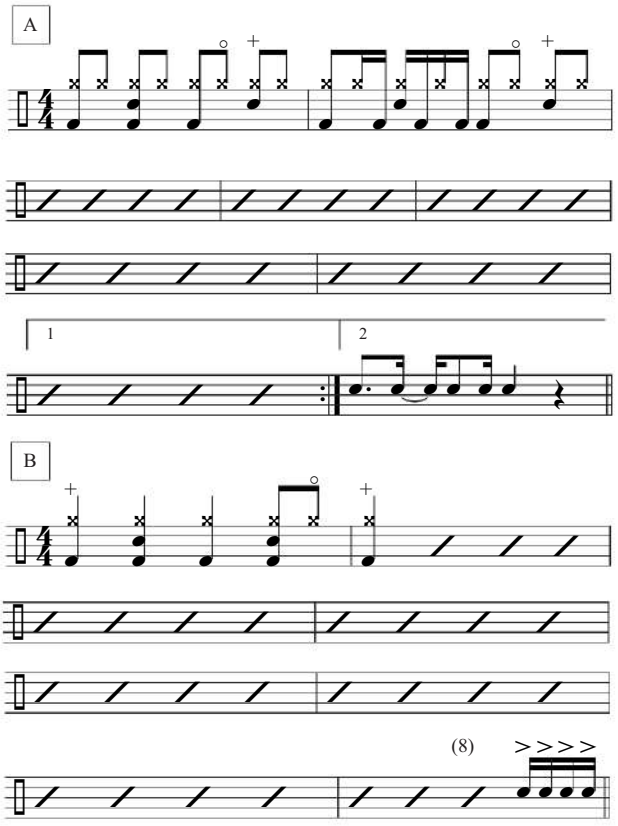
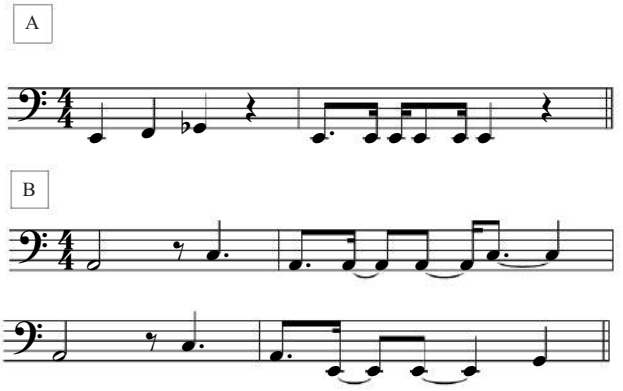
"Top 40" is industry shorthand for the most popular, best-selling, and most frequently broadcast songs within a given week, month, or year. Over time, it has also come to represent any popular song from a particular era. This "Timber Grooves" play-along is a Top 40 dance/pop tune in the tradition of Justin Timberlake, the Neptunes, and Timbaland.

STRUCTURE: AABA 32-BAR FORM

This chart employs the traditional AABA thirty-two-bar form. It consists of two sections, A and B. Each section has three key musical attributes: a different rhythm, an eight-bar phrase, and a particular riff and chord structure. Let's examine these elements individually.

There are two grooves present within this chart. The A section is a two-bar phrase that features a straight-8th closed hi-hat over a syncopated 16th-note bass drum pattern.



The B section is a one-bar phrase and features a quarter-note hi-hat and bass drum pattern with an open hi-hat on the "&" of beat 4.

Each letter, A and B, also denotes an eight-bar phrase. Therefore, the A section features eight bars of the 8th-note hi-hat groove (play the two-bar pattern four times), and letter B indicates eight bars of the quarter-note groove.

Both sections are also centered on a particular riff and chord progression. In this case, the A section utilizes a unique riff based on the tonic (I) chord, while the B section is based on the subdominant (IV) chord. Listen to the MP3 to hear the changes.

PERFORMANCE NOTES: SOUND

This chart utilizes a very staccato, bury-the-beater bass drum sound alongside strong rimshots on the snare and light but thick hi-hat articulation. Let's take a look at how to achieve these sounds.

BURY THE BASS DRUM BEATER

The bass drum pattern should be played forcefully, with a staccato articulation and at a loud dynamic. This can be accomplished by utilizing the following strategies. First, use a plastic or wood bass drum beater. Many pop drummers make this choice because it gives each stroke's impact a detailed punch and attack, rather than a warm "oomph," which helps to cut through the aggressive distorted synths and thick-textured bass lines.

Technique-wise, after each stroke, try keeping the beater pushed into the drumhead. Not only does this muffle the drum, but it also adds extra attack to the initial stroke. Just be careful that you press firmly enough to avoid any unwanted beater buzz.

Most drummers use mostly their ankle for each stroke, which results in a fast, accurate tone. That technique isn't appropriate for this chart, however, because it lacks projection and power. I suggest that you use your entire leg and foot to make each stroke. This can be accomplished by placing your foot on the pedal footboard, lifting your leg straight upward, and using your entire body weight to strike the drum. Your back should be perfectly relaxed (although straight), and your posture should be normal. Don't lunge forward when playing the bass drum.

SNARE DRUM RIMSHOTS

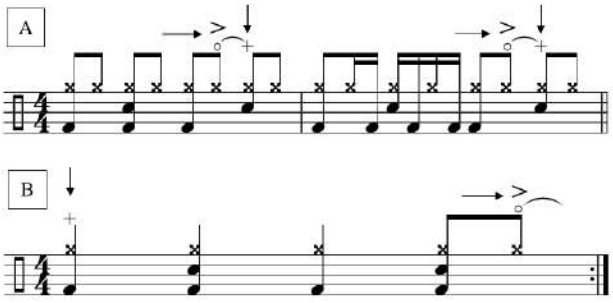
The snare drum should be played very consistently and at a medium-loud dynamic. Each hit should be played as a rimshot, which is executed by hitting the center of the drumhead and the rim at the same time. Many drummers think a rimshot is played with a caveman-like arm motion. Actually, the rimshot is loudest—and most effective—when the stroke is started by the wrist and finished by the fingers. Let's examine this technique.

While aiming for the center of the snare head, start the stroke with your wrist. Just before hitting the rim and center of the drum, grab the stick with your back three fingers. This lends a nice, crisp attack to an already powerful stroke.

LIGHT, SHOULDER HI-HAT STROKES

The 8th-note hi-hat pattern in this chart should be played evenly, at a medium-soft dynamic. In order to achieve this sound, use the shoulder of the stick midway down from the tip, and strike the edge (not the top) of the cymbals. The hi-hat should be closed with your foot, but not so tightly that it chokes the tone. Rather than an articulation of "chick," think of your hi-hat saying "chunk."

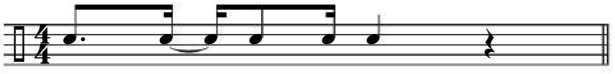
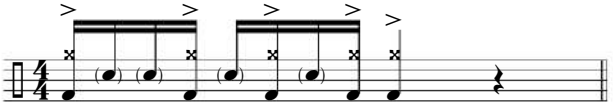
Each hi-hat opening should be played as an accented note, immediately followed by a closed stroke.

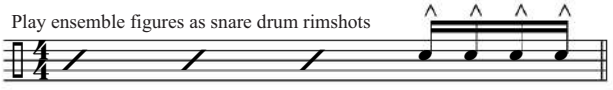


You should now have a strong, punchy, and present bass drum sound, an open rimshot, and a thick, articulate hi-hat. This approach perfectly complements the spacious and rhythmic textures of the chart.

TALK-DOWN: ENSEMBLE FIGURES

Now that you understand the form of the song and the proper articulations for the drumset, let's look at a few performance details.

Letter A has an ensemble figure in bar 16 (the second ending). This same figure shows up again in the last measure of the chart (the coda). Here's what's notated:

Here's one way to interpret that figure on the drumset:

Letter B has an ensemble figure in bar 8. I suggest that you play all four 16th notes on the snare as rimshots.



NOW MAKE MUSIC

You could play thousands of intricate variations and fills in this chart. But the goal should always be to make the most danceable music possible, by playing an appropriate groove, keeping your place in the form, and employing a stylistically correct drum sound. Best of luck, and have fun!

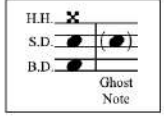
Donny Gruendler is the director of performance programs at Musicians Institute in Los Angeles and the creator of Hudson Music's download series *Seeing Sounds* and *Private Lessons*. Donny has performed with DJ Logic, Rick Holmstrom, John Medeski, and Rhett Frazier Inc. For more info, visit donnygruendler.com.

Metrically Modulated Drum 'n' Bass

Using Triplets to Imply Faster Tempos

by Andy Shoniker

MUSIC KEY

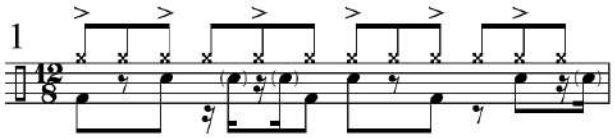


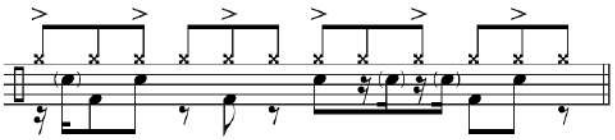
Over the past decade, the drum 'n' bass style of drumming has taken off in a big way. Many drummers tend to emulate this style by simply playing in double time. For example, if your band is grooving along at 85 bpm, you could just jump to 170 bpm. That's a very logical and easy method, but I'd like to present another option for transitioning into a drum 'n' bass feel that's a bit less natural but sounds amazing.

We're going to use the three-over-two polyrhythm as the basic structure for these patterns. By accenting every other triplet partial, you can imply a new quarter-note pulse. Think of the triplet partials as 8th notes, and play any drum 'n' bass groove to create a crazy polyrhythmic feel that still locks in with the original pulse. This technique allows you to make a groove feel as if it's speeding up, without actually changing the tempo. For example, if you're originally playing at 110 bpm, when you modulate to the triplet-based 8th note, it will sound like you're playing at around 160 bpm.

Here are a dozen drum 'n' bass grooves that use the three-against-two polyrhythm as the pulse. The examples are written in 12/8 for clarity, but you could think of each three-note grouping as a triplet in 4/4.

1





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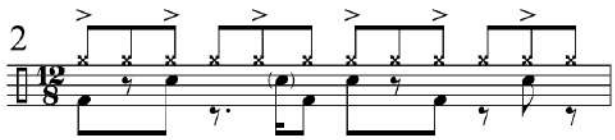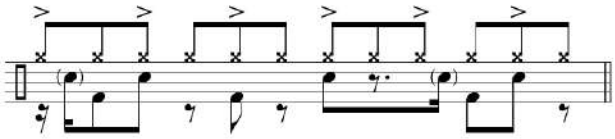

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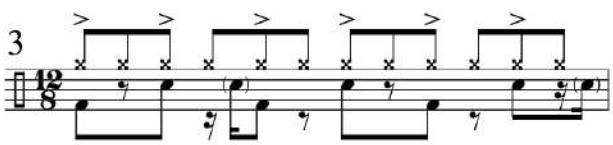

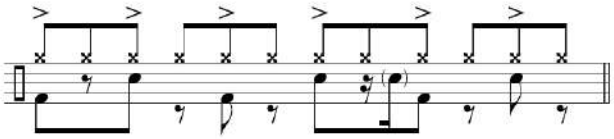

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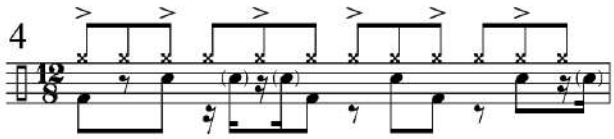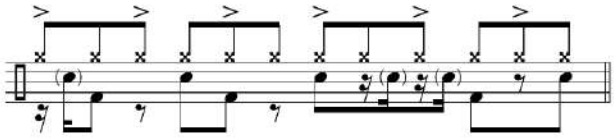

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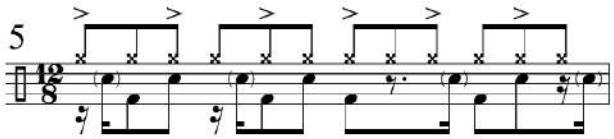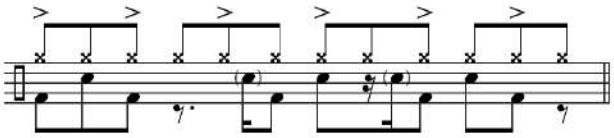

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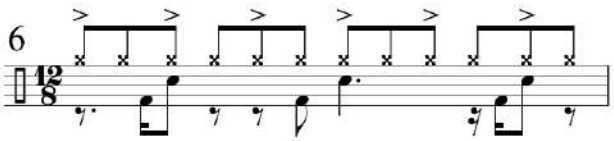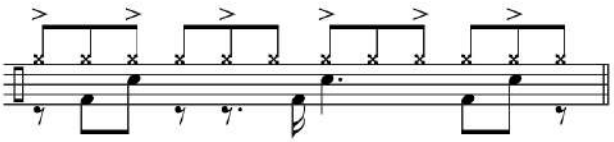

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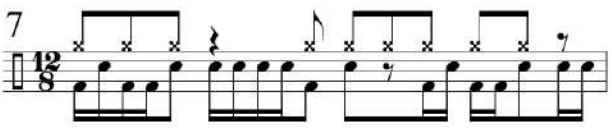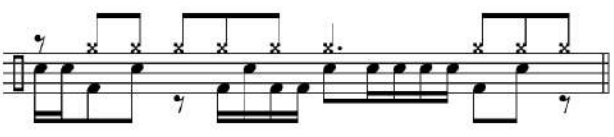
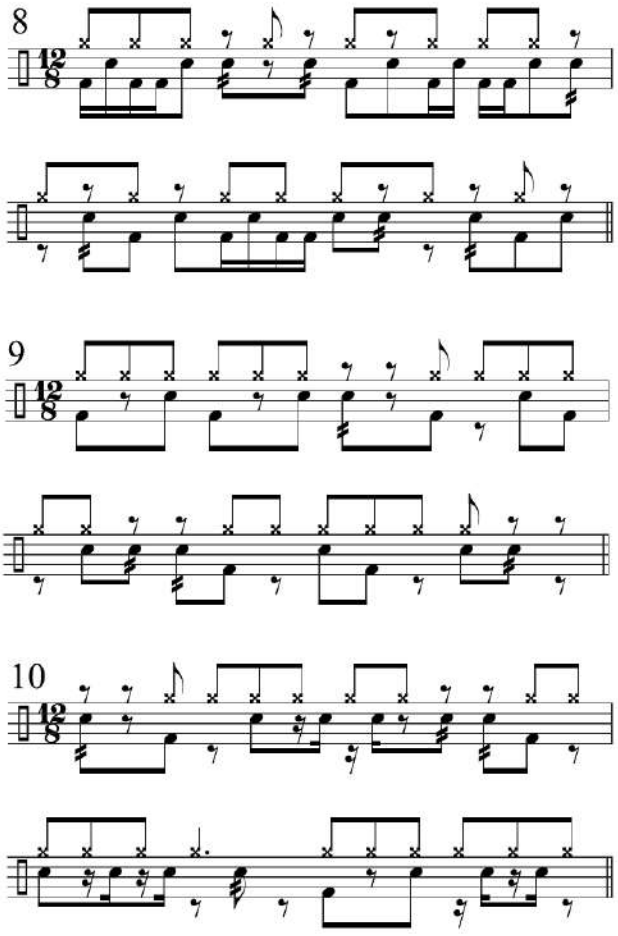

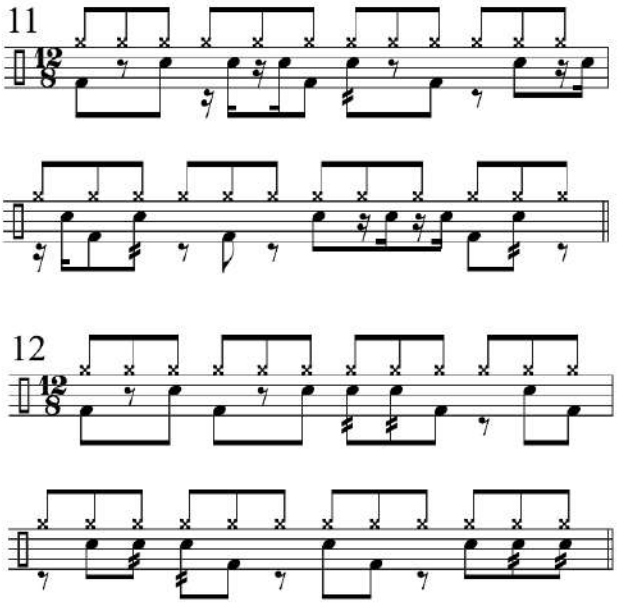

Andy Shoniker is a professional musician living in Toronto. He's a graduate of the Berklee College of Music and endorses SJC drums, Paiste cymbals, Vater sticks, and Evans heads. He is also the creator of the Rhythm Trainer app. For more information, visit andyshoniker.com.

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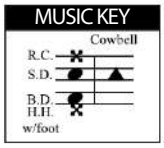
Swingin' the Clave

Advanced Exercises for Developing Independence

by Steve Fidyk

MODERN DRUMMER DIGITALLY ENHANCED

MUSIC KEY

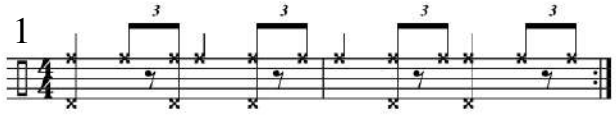
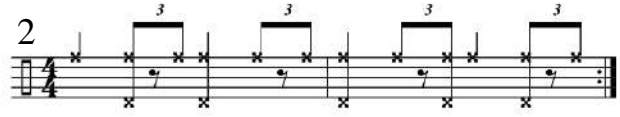


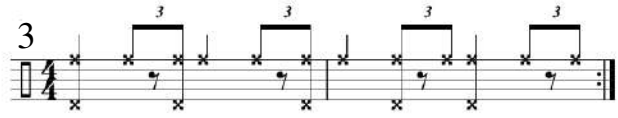
In jazz, the ride cymbal is the focal point for creating a flowing, swinging time feel. In Afro-Cuban music, the clave assumes this role. Essentially, clave is to Afro-Cuban music what the ride cymbal beat is to swing. The fundamental style, pulse, and feel are built upon those rhythms. This article combines swing and clave as a vehicle for developing left-foot independence on the drumset.

The exercises specifically deal with playing 2:3 and 3:2 clave rhythms with your left foot as you swing on your ride cymbal with your right hand. Many contemporary drummers, like Antonio Sanchez, Robby Ameen, and Dafnis Prieto, use this technique effectively when accompanying soloists or as a foundational rhythm to solo over.

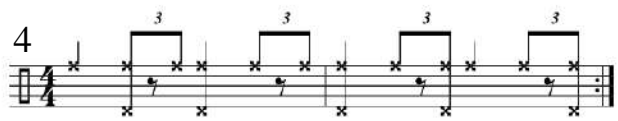
BASIC RIDE/CLAVE COMBOS

Highly developed independence helps you build the confidence needed to improvise freely. Below are some clave and ride cymbal ostinatos to practice first.

3:2 son clave

2:3 son clave

3:2 rumba clave

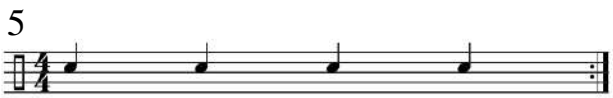
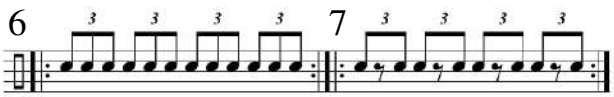
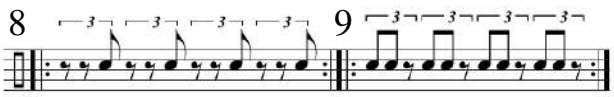
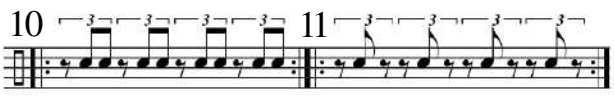


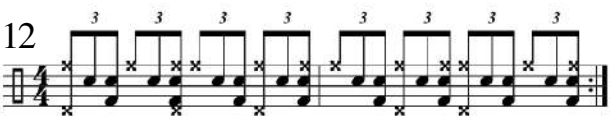
2:3 rumba clave

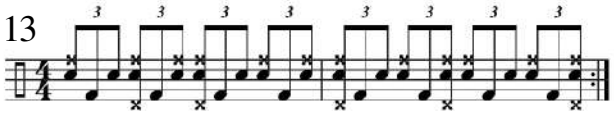


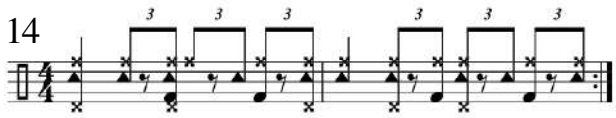
ADD THE TRIPLETS

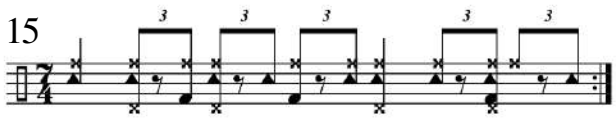
Once you have control of the basic clave/ride rhythms, the next step is to add the different triplet subdivisions with your left hand. Practice each example slowly, focusing on one triplet rhythm at a time until each pattern begins to groove. As you work through these patterns, listen closely to how the rhythms relate to one another. Also, be sure to have a consistent balance of sound between your upper and lower appendages.

The following examples are the various ways in which you can divide quarter notes using an 8th-note-triplet subdivision.

APPLICATION

Practice playing the triplet subdivisions with each of the clave and ride cymbal patterns in Examples 1–4. The combination possibilities are endless. This next example combines 3:2 son clave with the triplet subdivision in Example 10 on the snare and the triplet subdivision in Example 8 on the bass drum.

In this next pattern, we're combining 2:3 rumba clave with the triplet subdivision in Example 7 on the snare and the triplet subdivision in Example 11 on the bass drum.

13

You can also try layering other Afro-Cuban rhythms. Here's a combination of a 3:2 rumba clave in the left foot, a cascara pattern in the left hand on cowbell or pandeiro, and the tumbao rhythm in the right foot.

14

Also experiment with different time signatures. Here's an example in 7/4 that incorporates a cascara pattern with the left hand.

15

These are just a few possibilities. Experimentation is key to coming up with ideas that sound fresh. For even more advanced coordination practice, try assigning a triplet subdivision to your left hand, and improvise with your right foot. Then do the reverse. Have fun!

Steve Fidyk co-leads the Taylor/Fidyk Big Band (with arranger Mark Taylor), freelances with vocalist Maureen McGovern, and is a member of the jazz studies faculty at Temple University in Philadelphia. Fidyk is the author of several instructional books. His latest, *Big Band Drumming at First Sight*, is available through Alfred Publishing.

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COLLECTOR'S CORNER

Leedy Orchestra Snare

by Harry Cangany

If we could go back in time to somewhere between 1906 and 1911, odds are we would find quite a few of this month's featured snare, which is a 3x15 Leedy with a patented 1907 Combination snare strainer and muffler. The shell is solid maple with huge reinforcement hoops, and the Leedy name is stamped into the interior wood. The drum is single tension, with the thumb-rod tensioning system pioneered by Ulysses G. Leedy, the founder of the company.

I've never been a fan of single-tension drums; I often refer to them as museum pieces. The reason is that the tensioning of two heads to the same degree produces a limited sound. Changing a head on one of these drums can be a nightmare too. Most collectors prefer vintage drums with separate tensioning, which started appearing just a few years later, when Leedy was building drums at the Indianapolis factory.

The most interesting thing about this drum is the Combination strainer, which was designed by Charles Wanamaker. This strainer allows the drummer to easily get a tom-tom sound by activating the spring-loaded lever on the throw-off. Prior to this invention, drummers would have to place a drumstick between the snares and the bottom head to create a tom sound, because the older strainers had just a simple threaded rod that went into a lower jaw that held the snare wires. Snares back then were often held in a leather butt plate that was grabbed by the bottom hoop. With the 1906 design, the strainer mechanism and the butt side were actually screwed into the bottom hoop.

Here's what Leedy said about the Combination strainer in its 1908 catalog: "The snares are disengaged by a downward pressure on a thumb bracket provided on the casing and returned to action by a mere touch of the friction key on the opposite side of the casing." This strainer has an internal spring that allows the casing to be raised or lowered and that provides tension. If the strainer is lowered, the snares are lowered on one side, which creates a diagonal line with a bit of the snares touching the bottom head.

Leedy Combination strainer

The Combination strainer was renamed by 1916 as the Ideal and stayed around until about 1920. Leedy introduced another strainer, the Utility, which existed through the Leedy & Ludwig days into the 1950s.

Special thanks to John Ridder, who found this snare and brought it to our attention. I would value this "museum piece" at about $250. It originally listed for $32.25 in 1910 and was available with a solid maple or solid walnut shell, in six different sizes. The 15" model here was a favorite among orchestral players.

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lpmusic.com

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The 20" K Constantinople Bounce ride is a smaller version of the popular 22" model launched two years ago. Like the 22" cymbal, which was developed in conjunction with jazz great Kenny Washington, the 20" Bounce ride is medium-thin in weight and features traditional K Constantinople hammering and eight unique cluster hammer marks on top. The 20" model has more pronounced lathing and tonal grooves to produce a darker wash and sustain.
zildjian.com

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tocapercussion.com

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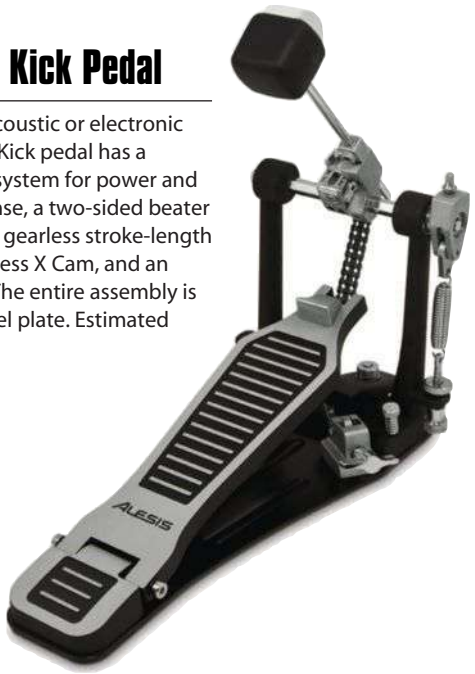

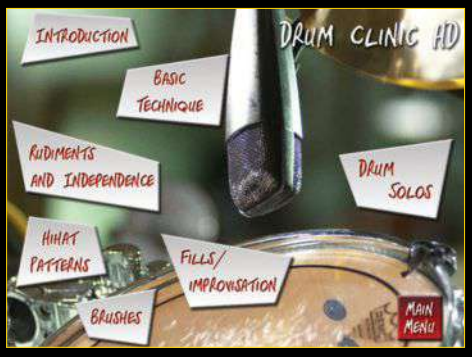

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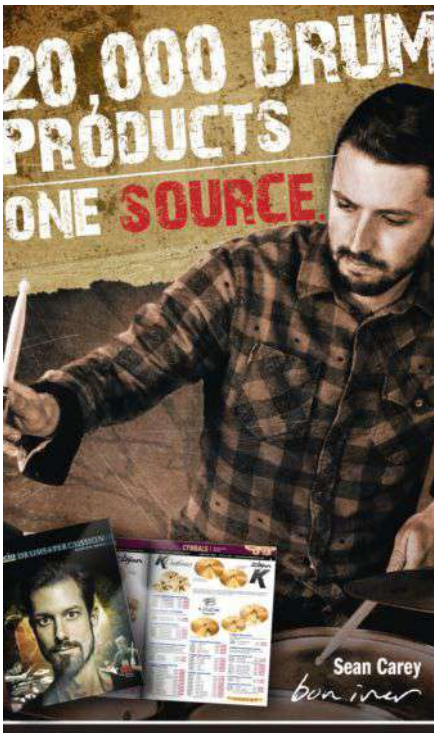
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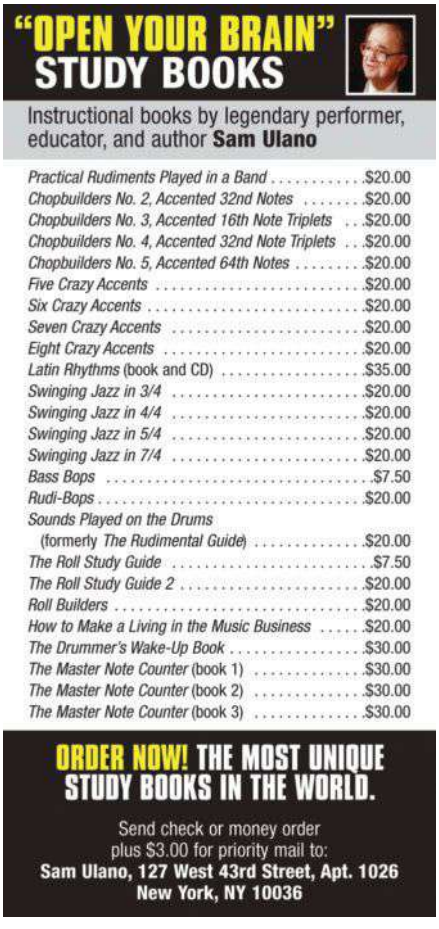
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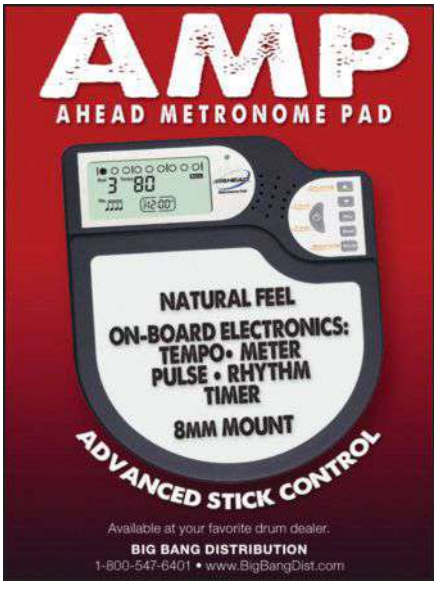
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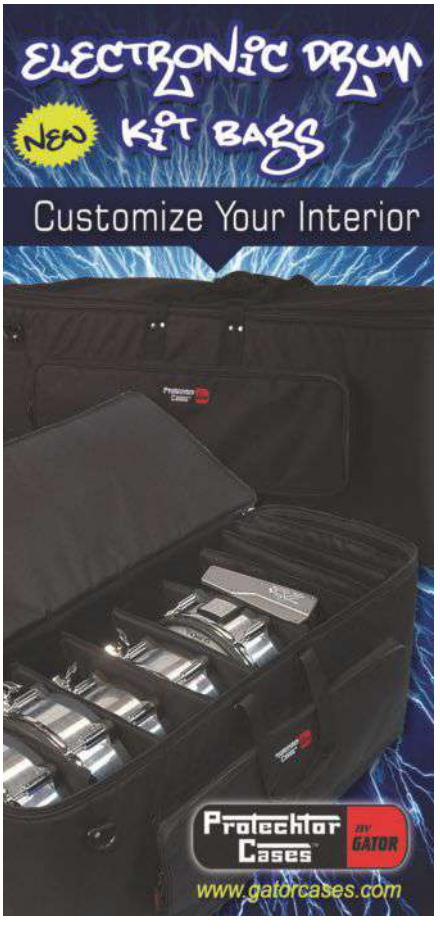
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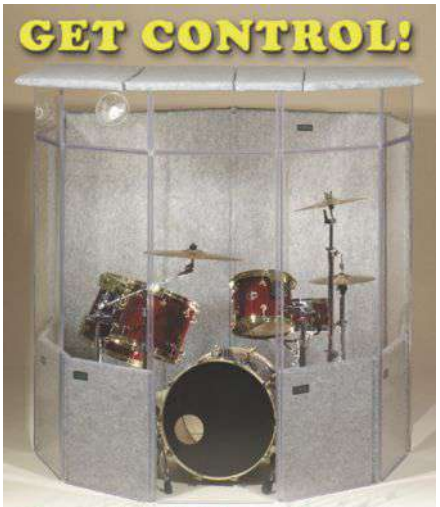

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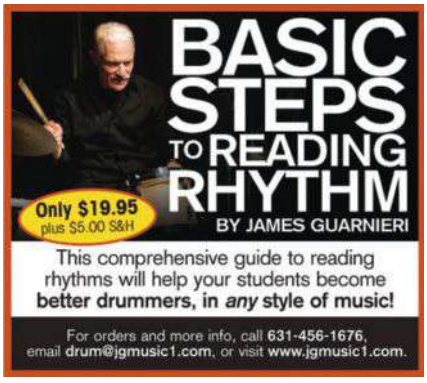

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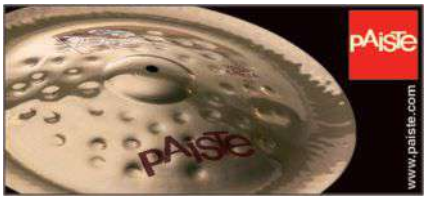

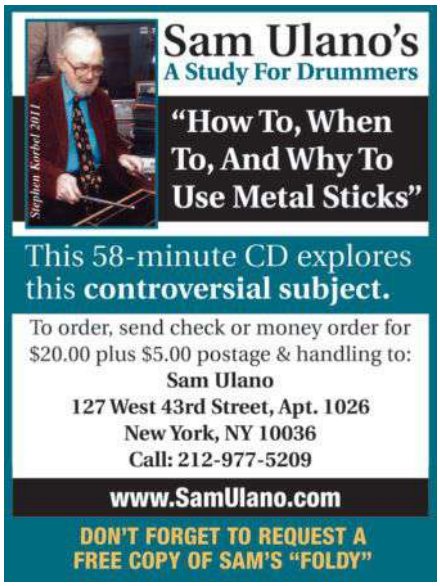

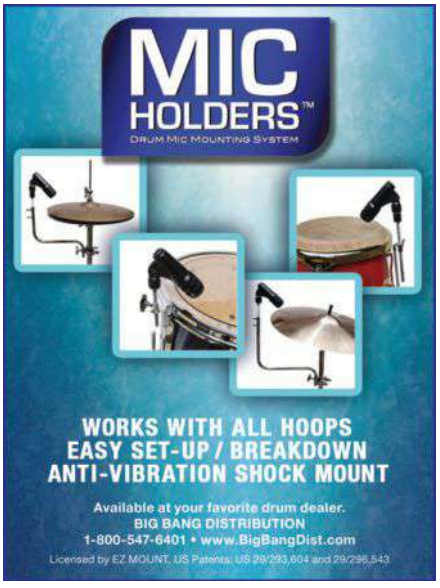

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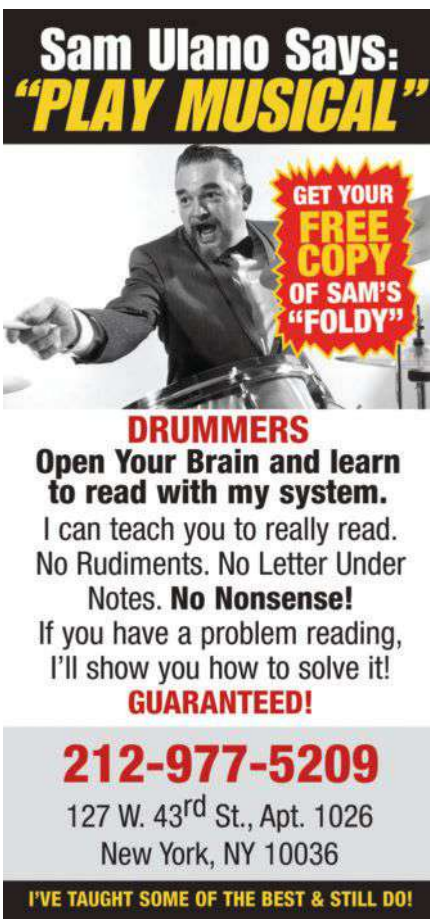

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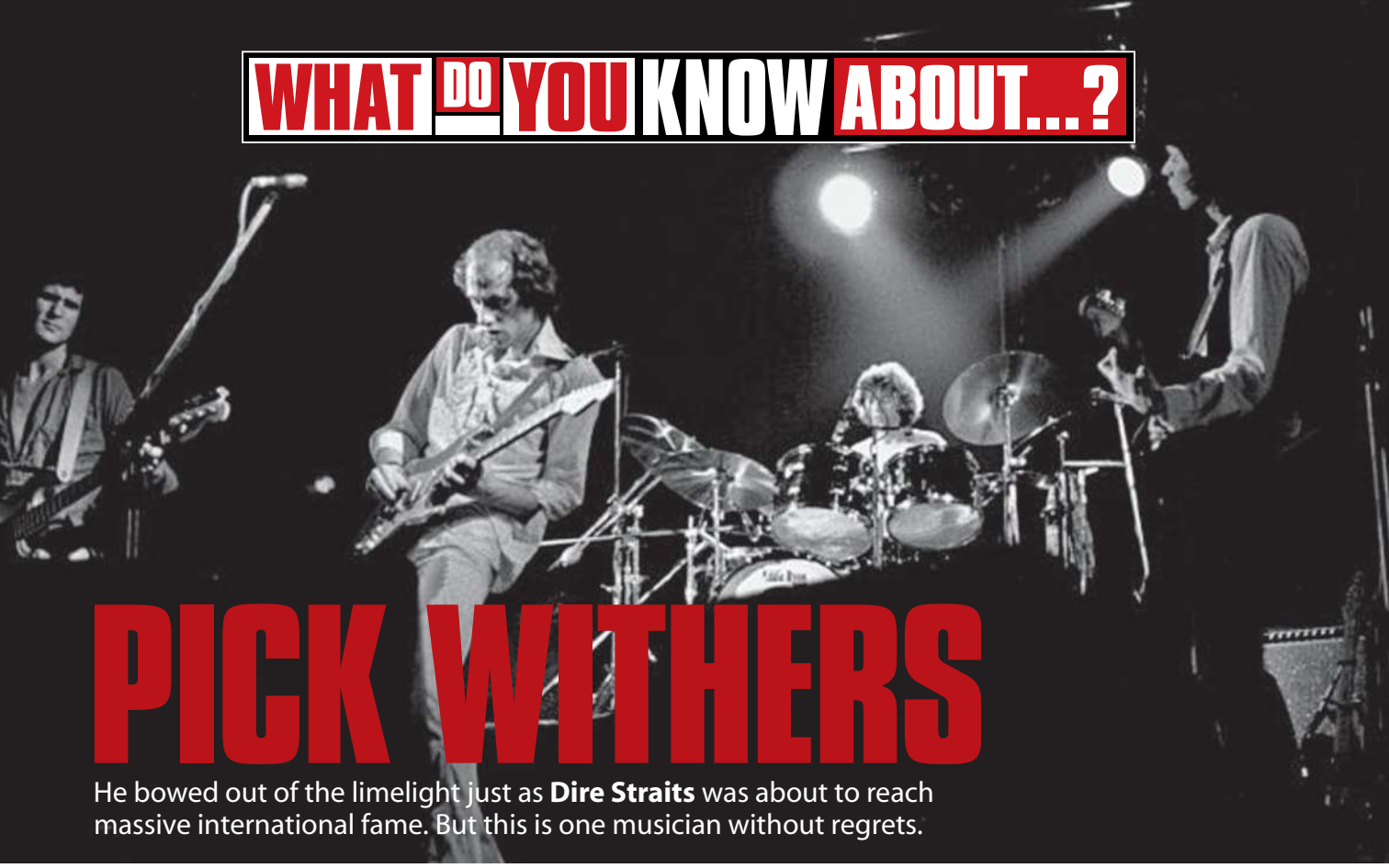


PICK WITHERS

He bowed out of the limelight just as **Dire Straits** was about to reach massive international fame. But this is one musician without regrets.

David "Pick" Withers came into the world in 1948 in the East Midlands city of Leicester—not exactly the swing capital of post-war England, but still providing opportunities for budding young drummers via the local Boys Brigade band. "I was aware of playing on biscuit tins with knitting needles as a child and asking my parents for drums," Withers reminisces. "But I was never allowed them. In those days the Boys Brigade would march every month, and you could run out and march with them. Somehow, that idea got into my head and I joined up. But I knew why I was joining—I wanted to get a drum!"

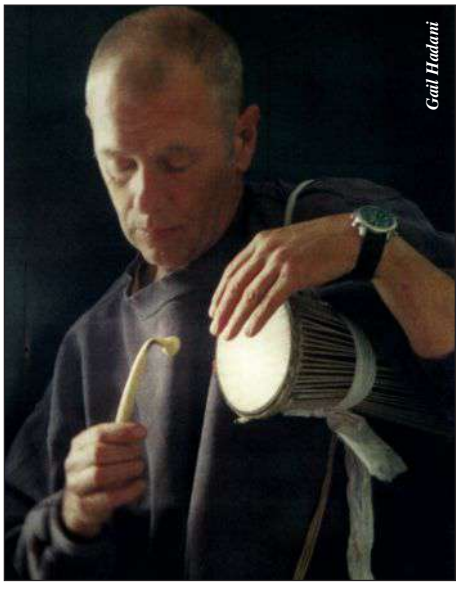
By the end of the 1950s, England's teenagers were being turned on to American rock 'n' roll, but unlike his peers, Pick focused his attention on more homegrown talent. "My first influences were the Shadows," he says, "because they gave you a great basic principle for playing in a combo, and they had good drummers."

Come the early '60s, Beatlemania was influencing an entire generation of inner-city adolescents to pick up guitars in musical revolution. "I'm eternally grateful to the Beatles," Withers says, "because they opened everything up for me. By the time I was eighteen I was playing in Europe."

Following three successful years in Italy with the English band the Primitives, Withers returned home and joined Spring. That group was based in the now legendary South Wales recording studio Rockfield, through which Withers connected with singer/guitarist Dave Edmunds ("I Hear You Knocking," "I Knew the Bride," "Girls Talk"). "When Spring ran its course," the drummer explains, "there was an attempt to create a house band at Rockfield. I ended up doing a tour for Dave Edmunds to promote 'I Hear You Knocking,' in a band that included Andy Fairweather Low, and a few years later I ended up touring in Brinsley Schwarz with Edmunds and Nick Lowe. The tour was recorded, and some of the tracks ended up on Edmunds' *Subtle as a Flying Mallet* album.

"This was also the first time I wore earplugs," Pick continues, "as Dave had a very loud Fender Goliath amp, and I was terrified of it. He was a big fan of the Beach Boys and announced one day that he'd found the ultimate sound for guitar—double tracked sixty-three times! Apparently sixty-four was too much. But he's got a great pop voice, like the late Gerry Rafferty, who I also recorded with. Those guys have a tone in their voices that sits so beautifully on the track. The other instruments don't need to be compressed underneath. It's all there; nothing swamps their voices."

By 1973, Withers was making a name for



Withers back in his Dire Straits days (left) and today

MY 20 YEARS WITH VATER!

I gotta say….I've been pretty lucky! Over the years I've gotten a lot of offers from companies asking me to endorse their product. My own rule has always been that I would never endorse any product that I wouldn't buy myself, if endorsements weren't an option. That's exactly how I ended up with Vater in 1992.

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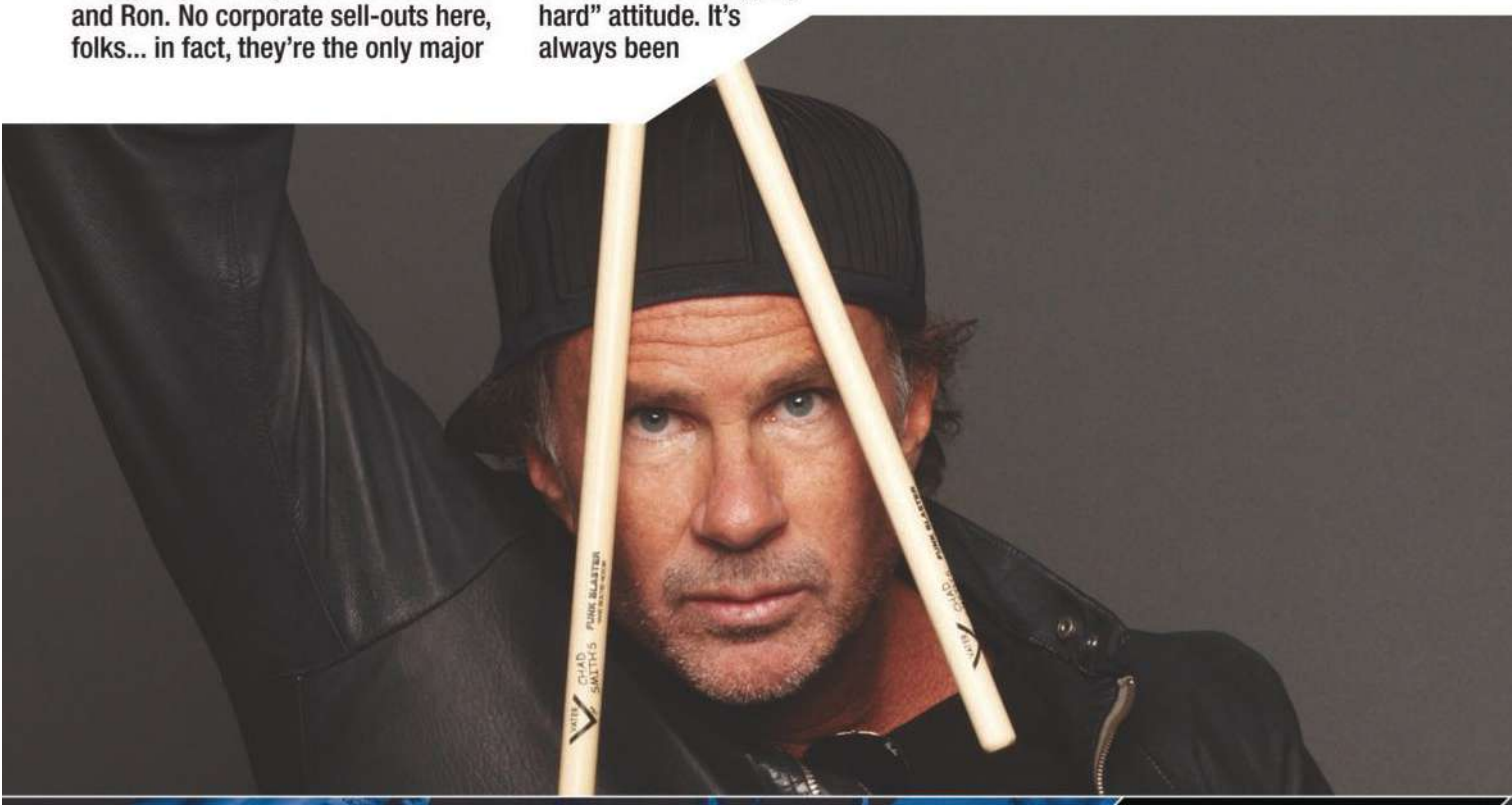

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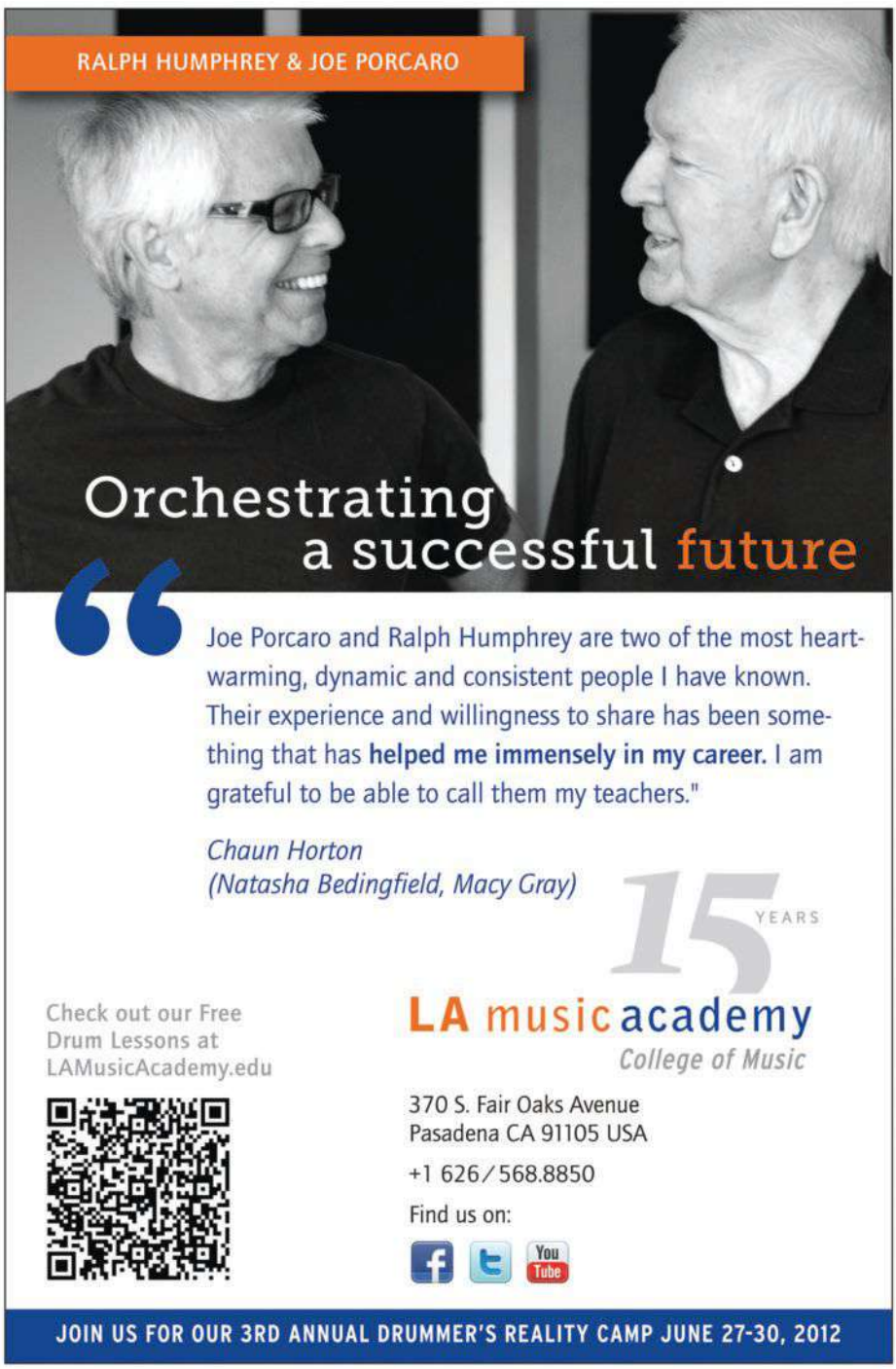
PICK HITS

Spring, *Spring*

One of Pick Withers' earliest recordings is the 1971 self-titled album by the melodic Leicester, England, prog band Spring. Many of the drummer's attributes are clearly evident even at this point in his career, including clear articulations, a relaxed yet sophisticated sense of groove, and an easy way with rudimental-style drums, particularly on the track "Shipwrecked Soldier."

Dire Straits, *Dire Straits*

After recording and performing with a wide variety of artists during the beginning of the decade, including the future pub-rock star Dave Edmunds, the British neo-folk guitar great Bert Jansch, and the popular folk-rock band Magna Carta, Withers settled in with Dire Straits, whose debut album was a surprise hit in 1978. The band's straddling of old- and new-wave sensibilities made for a perfect environment for Withers, whose cool but playful, almost Southern-soul-style grooves helped Mark Knopfler's Dylan-inspired songs resonate with a wide audience. In the main article, Withers says that the famous lick around 3:40 into the breakout smash "Sultans of Swing" isn't a paradiddle. It's pretty darned close, though, in the first two beats—the bass drum simply replaces a couple of the notes that would be on the snare. The second half is similar, but more like the type of linear Latin sticking that Stanton Moore uses on New Orleans rumba-style grooves. Throughout the track, Withers flits nimbly between the hi-hat and the ride, catching upbeats and dancing gracefully on the cymbals.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himself on the London studio scene, but his big break would come with Dire Straits' 1978 self-titled debut album. That recording includes the cut "Sultans of Swing," which propelled the band into the top ten on both sides of the Atlantic. "Sultans" also introduced a myth into the world of drum folklore. During the verse that features the line "…and says at last, just as the time bell rings," it's often assumed that Withers is playing a paradiddle broken up between the snare drum and ride cymbal, but this is not the case. "It's not paradiddle sticking," Pick says. "I borrowed it from drummer George Grantham, off a live Poco record. I learned it off a lick that starts on the cowbell."

Following Dire Straits' second album, *Communiqué*, Withers played on Bob Dylan's platinum-selling *Slow Train Coming*—on a recommendation from Straits leader Mark Knopfler, who played guitar on the Dylan LP—pushing his reputation to yet another level. "It was like being a professional footballer waiting for that million-pound transfer deal," the drummer says. "Doing Dylan was a big a change for me, a benchmark. When I came away from that, I felt I didn't have to prove myself to anybody anymore. My only reservation was that *Slow Train* was Dylan's 'religious album,' and I was so looking forward to doing something like *Blood on the Tracks* or *Desire*. But no matter—it was still Bob Dylan."

Slow Train was recorded at the famed Muscle Shoals studio, with Barry Beckett and Jerry Wexler producing. It was a historic meeting of gargantuan music talents, but not without differences of opinion. "Dylan likes to have everyone there from day one," Withers says. "He doesn't do overdubs, and he doesn't do guide vocals; the vocal he sings on the first take is the master vocal. I have tremendous admiration for him. That's why you get such wonderful energy on the tracks. But Wexler was determined that we wouldn't do this, and he sent various people home. Dylan was quite suspicious but went along with the approach and eventually relaxed into it. There was one track that

Dire Straits, *Making Movies*

Featuring significant contributions from E Street Band keyboardist Roy Bittan, *Making Movies* indeed reaches heights of ambition and mood reminiscent of Bruce Springsteen's early work, especially the classic *Born to Run*. Sporting a noticeably bigger drum sound, Withers alternately grounds and pokes and prods Knopfler's greatest set of songs. It's all about timing and taste with Pick, and at every turn he's there with fresh ideas that serve the songs' trajectory. Check out the break at about 3:30 on the regal opening track, "Tunnel of Love." Switching from 8th-note ride cymbal to double-handed hi-hat 16ths, punctuated by snare and tom jabs, Withers adds further drama to an already cool deviation, then moves into a quick but exciting joust with Knopfler that leads into the guitar solo. Equally fun and dramatic moments are scattered liberally throughout the album.

Bob Dylan, *Slow Train Coming*

The iconic singer-songwriter surprised many in 1979 with this, his first "Christian" album. Brits Withers and Knopfler joined American studio/stage vets Barry Beckett (keyboards) and Tim Drummond (bass) and the Muscle Shoals Horns, making for a slick yet soulful rhythm bed upon which Dylan placed his newly focused lyrics. Withers has lots to work with here; Knopfler's uniquely rhythmic guitar playing never fights Pick's penchant for creative drum orchestration ("Slow Train," "When You Gonna Wake Up"), and stately cymbal work and a throbbing bass drum add new levels of detail and heft to the album's opening hit, "Gotta Serve Somebody."

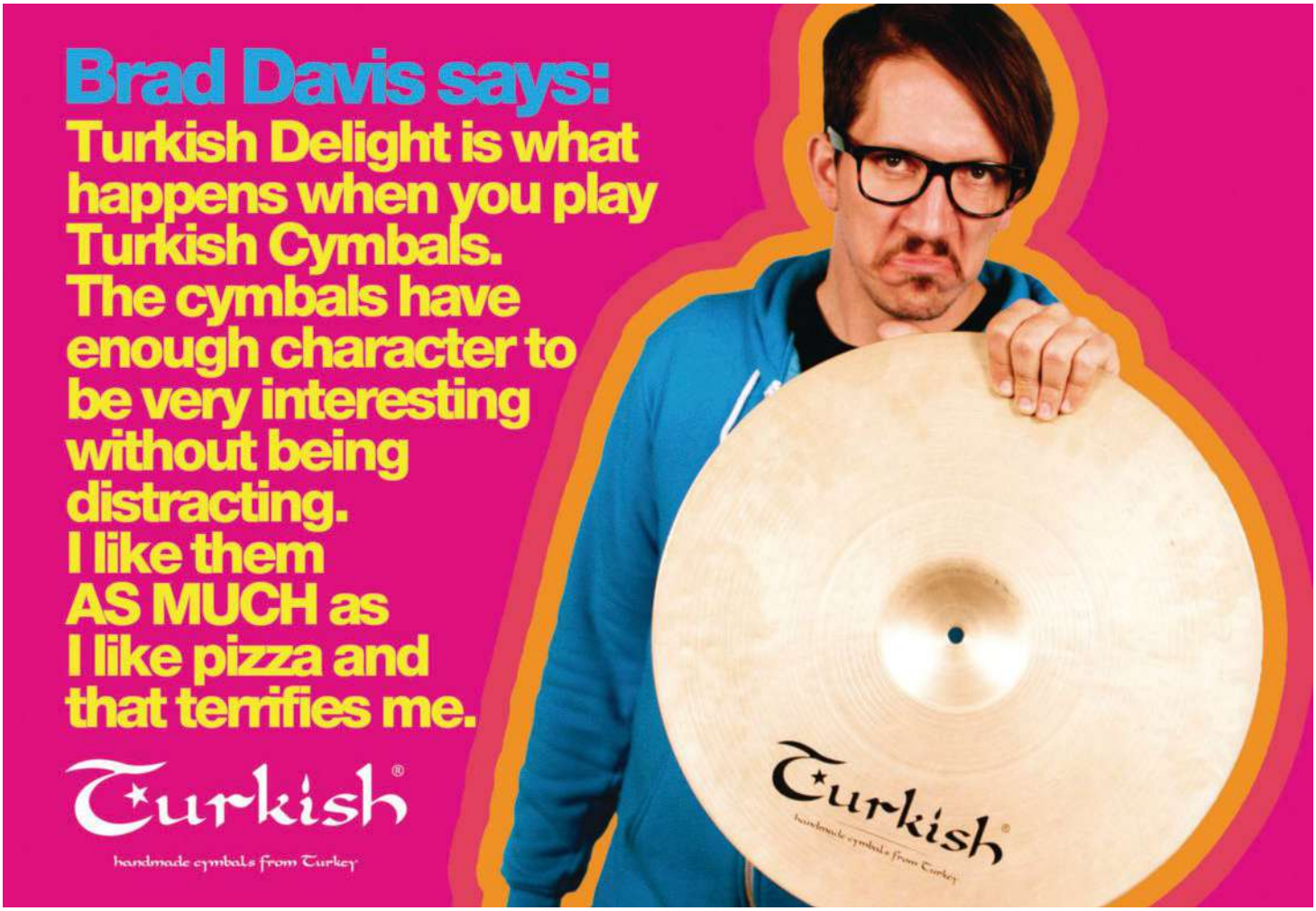
Adam Budofsky

was about fifteen verses long that Wexler wanted to edit. So we cut the tape down to about seven verses, and Dylan overdubbed his new vocal. He didn't like [the way that sounded], so it was re-edited using the original vocal take. It was *so* much better, as you could hear us responding to his voice."

Though Withers says that in the end he spent only ten days with Dylan and hasn't seen him since, he believes the bard was pleased with what he played. The recording process certainly left a great impression on Withers. "I learned something during that session about recording and keeping one's integrity," he says.

Dire Straits' third album, 1980's *Making Movies*, spawned the hit "Romeo and Juliet" and features some of Withers' best work. The track "Skateaway" in particular is a lesson in laid-back but precise in-the-pocket playing. Recorded in America with Jimmy Iovine and Shelly Yakus, *Making Movies* allowed Withers to experience new approaches in achieving drum sounds. "We used Remo Diplomats on the kit," he says. "Three takes, and we threw them off. We used torque keys for the tension. It was worth it for the sound, but it was hell. Shelly had some hi-hats he wanted me to use that were rather dull—almost like a dustbin-lid sound effect. But he EQ'd them, and the payoff was that they didn't bleed."

After the release of 1982's *Love Over Gold* album, Withers feared that Dire Straits was moving further into stadium-rock territory and made a graceful exit. Despite leaving at a pivotal point in the band's career—on the brink of reaching A-list international status with 1985's *Brothers in Arms*—Withers says he has no regrets about his decision, as it allowed him to spend more time with his family while continuing to work with artists like Brian Auger, Dennis Locorriere, and Joan Baez. These days Pick splits his time between selective gigs and teaching.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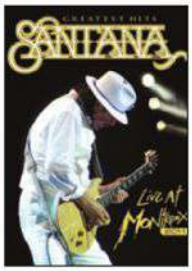
by Ilya Stemkovsky



SANTANA
GREATEST HITS LIVE AT MONTREUX 2011 (DVD)

This three-hour concert from the tireless Santana band features red-hot versions of all the hits, plus cool covers of "Back in Black" and "Sunshine of Your Love." If you want fire, drummer **DENNIS CHAMBERS** and percussionists **RAUL REKOW** and **KARL PERAZZO** provide it, with incredibly tight interplay on "Gypsy Queen" and "Batuka." **CINDY BLACKMAN** sits in on a couple of tunes, but it's Chambers' metric-modulation-heavy, head-scratching solo in "Soul Sacrifice" that's the real show-stopper. And yes, he's chewing gum the whole time. (Eagle Rock)

STYX *THE GRAND ILLUSION/ PIECES OF EIGHT* (DVD)

Performing classic albums front to back is all the rage these days (see the Rush review below), and Styx jumps into the fold with a 2010 presentation of two of its best-loved records, 1977's *The Grand Illusion* and 1978's *Pieces of Eight*. **TODD SUCHERMAN** simply rips on the material, infusing original drummer John Panozzo's album parts with tremendous power and whipping out amazing fills and double bass work throughout the show. Dig the blazing tom rolls on "Come Sail Away"—this is certainly not the radio version. (Eagle Rock)

B.B. KING *LIVE AT THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL 2011* (DVD)

The thrill was *not* gone when eighty-five-year-old blues legend B.B. King recorded this loose but fun star-studded affair with guests Derek Trucks, Susan Tedeschi, Ronnie Wood, Mick Hucknall, and Slash in London last year. Longtime drummer **TONY COLEMAN** knows who the stars are, and his playing has the mature restraint that only a million gigs can develop. Also available as a Blu-ray disc. (Shout Factory)

BILLY KILSON'S BK GROOVE *RHYTHM DANCER* (CD/DVD)

Drummer **BILLY KILSON** grooves mightily on this energetic live set of tight funk/fusion, never eschewing musicality for showmanship or chops, but providing plenty of excitement along the way. His displaced snare and ghosting pattern on "Same Clothes, Different Day" is a head-bobbing delight, and he slowly builds a beat from nothing during the keys solo of "And Eye You (BC)," adding each element one by one, like a producer. Some different tunes and an interview appear on a welcome companion DVD. (billykilson.com)

ARRIVAL *LIVE* (CD/DVD)

This set by the **RUSS MILLER**–led Arrival trio features the hit-making pop drummer, along with bassist Jerry Watts and keyboardist/singer Rick Krive, plus special guests, running a varied mix of tunes, from standards like "The Nearness of You" to Radiohead's "15 Step." Miller lays down studio-ready backbeats and swings nicely throughout the vocal-heavy concert. Check the companion DVD to see the drummer playing along to an onstage screen showing footage of Steve Smith and Steve Gadd. (russmiller.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS *GOLDEN GATE GROOVE: THE SOUND OF PHILADELPHIA LIVE IN SAN FRANCISCO 1973* (CD)

After nearly forty years in storage limbo, this historic CBS Records convention show featuring the O'Jays, Billy Paul, and Harold Melvin & the Blue Notes is finally released, highlighting the stage prowess of Gamble and Huff's Philly-soul house band, MFSB, and its drummer, **EARL YOUNG**. Young, who would later play on the Trammps' "Disco Inferno" and is sometimes credited with inventing disco drumming, supports the hits, including "Me and Mrs. Jones" and "Love Train," with fatback grooves and solid timekeeping. Makes you wonder what other treasures are collecting dust on those shelves. (Sony/Legacy)

RUSH *TIME MACHINE 2011: LIVE IN CLEVELAND* (CD)

Rush has been documenting every tour of late, with the latest release, *Time Machine 2011: Live in Cleveland*, reminding us that **NEIL PEART**'s powerful playing has yet to diminish. The treat here is the band's 1981 classic, *Moving Pictures*, performed in its entirety; hearing Peart tackle deep cuts like "The Camera Eye" and "Witch Hunt" with enthusiasm is worth the price of admission. Each tour also sees a slightly made-over drum feature, and Peart crams "Moto Perpetuo" with waltz ostinatos, wacky electronic sounds, and a "play-along" to the swing classic "Love for Sale." (Roadrunner)

MATS/MORGAN BAND *LIVE* (CD)

This reissue of a 1999 Mats/Morgan Band date from Sweden is a great entry point for those unfamiliar with the long-running keys/drums duo and its brand of psycho jazz-fusion. Drummer **MORGAN ÅGREN** is a hyperkinetic ball of mayhem, and he works out like a man possessed over the odd times of "Jigsaw Variations" and the Zappa-esque disco-funk of "Min Häst." There's ample support and soloing from the guitarist and bassist here, but the in-your-face keys and drums should exhaust your ears all by themselves. (Cuneiform)

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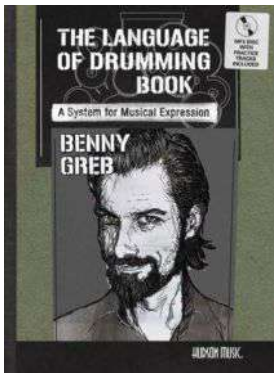

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THE LANGUAGE OF DRUMMING BOOK BY BENNY GREB

BOOK/CD LEVEL: ALL $19.99

The German mastermind drummer details his unique binary code (introduced on his top-selling DVD) to create a rhythmic language that's easy to understand and incorporate at every playing level. The system is based on twenty-four combinations of 16th-note and triplet (ternary) groupings. Greb starts by clapping the rhythms, then moves to the snare/pad and incorporates patterns with accents, eventually bringing it all to fruition on the kit, dividing the rhythmic alphabet among all four limbs. As in any language, letters form words and then sentences. Advancing into the more difficult odd groupings, Greb uses syllables to describe them, offering challenging exercises that open the mind to endless possibilities. The accompanying CD covers most of the written content and includes a bass guitar "Jam Track" to explore your newly discovered language. (Hudson) **Mike Haid**

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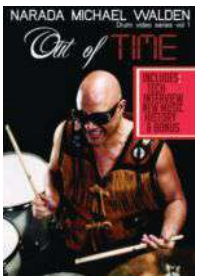

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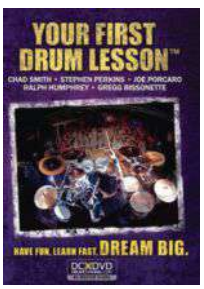
OUT OF TIME (DRUM VIDEO SERIES VOL. 1) FEATURING NARADA MICHAEL WALDEN

DVD LEVEL: ALL $24.95

It's almost enough just to see the master play, but hearing Narada Michael Walden's stream-of-consciousness thoughts on whatever he's throwing down at the moment is both hilarious and highly informative. *Out of Time* focuses on different odd meters, and there are plenty of full-band segments where Walden cuts loose with his famous fusion and funk skills. But the interviews are the X factor. Walden speaks about rolls, balance, wearing gloves, and his musical heroes, but also reminds the viewer to "be a kind person, tell your mother you love her, and wash your hands." It's not just about drums—it's about life. Bring on volume two! (Drum Channel) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



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YOUR FIRST DRUM LESSON

DVD LEVEL: BEGINNER $24.95

Several topics touched on in this DVD would certainly be important at a first lesson, including stick grip and how to strike a drum—covered here by Joe Porcaro and Ralph Humphrey. Elsewhere, Stephen Perkins dissects the drumkit, Gregg Bissonette testifies about tuning, and Chad Smith teaches a basic rock beat. Unfortunately, since the DVD is mostly made up of previously released Drum Channel classes, it can feel more like an infomercial than a progressive instructional video. As helpful as the individual chapters may be, beginners could be even better served by one inspiring up-and-coming player presenting a more cohesive package. (Drum Channel) **Robin Tolleson**

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Steve Jordan is the quintessential funky drummer. In the early days, his trademark pocket and versatility were called on for various sessions around New York City, and he became a household name among drummers after killing it night after night on national television in the original house bands for *SNL* and *Letterman*. These days, Steve remains in high demand not only for his unshakable groove but also for his deft skills as a producer and musical director. And through it all, *MD* has been there.

Antoine Sanfuentes

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IN MEMORIAM

WILLIE "BIG EYES" SMITH

Paul Natkin

Willie "Big Eyes" Smith, one of the great practitioners of a true American art form, was lost to blues fans around the world when he died last September 16 at age seventy-five. The drummer, harmonica player, singer, and songwriter, who gained international notoriety as Muddy Waters' longtime bandleader, was fighting bone cancer when he was felled by complications from a stroke.

Smith was born in 1936 and raised in Helena, Arkansas. Like his fellow Arkansan Levon Helm, he was weaned on live radio via the King Biscuit shows. Motivated by the dynamic harmonica playing of Sonny Boy Williamson, Willie learned the instrument himself, and at seventeen he followed the music to its source, Chicago.

Smith's arrival on the national scene came in 1955, on Bo Diddley's "Diddy Wah Diddy," which was recorded for impresario Leonard Chess's Checker label. Around that time, Smith switched to drums and began to play and record with Muddy Waters. He became a regular band member in 1961, taking an innovative approach to blending Delta blues with more urban forms. His style—largely the result of playing left-handed on a right-handed kit—was at once laid-back and energized. And whether Smith was playing a slow 12/8 or one of his patented shuffles, hitting just behind the beat, he drove a band like no one else. Apart from a period of several years in the mid-'60s, Smith remained with Waters until 1980 and played an important role in the blues icon's success on Grammy-winning albums such as *Hard Again*, *I'm Ready*, and *Muddy "Mississippi" Waters: Live*.

Like many artists of the genre, Smith found that his greatest acclaim seemed to come in his later years. In 1980, he started the Legendary Blues Band, which backed the illustrious John Lee Hooker in the hit movie *The Blues Brothers*. Recording seven albums with the LBB, Smith also began to hone his already fine singing skills. High points during this period included touring with Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones, and Eric Clapton.

In 1995, remaining true to his traditional roots, Willie began a series of solo works starting with that year's *Bag Full of Blues*. *Way Back*, from 2006, featured many of his own compositions and netted a Blues Foundation Award in the drum instrumentalist category. Smith's talents were acknowledged once again this past February, with a Grammy for Best Traditional Blues Album for *Joined at the Hip*, Willie's 2010 collaboration with the legendary blues pianist Pinetop Perkins.

Bob Girouard

TOM ARDOLINO

Anastasia Pantsios/Kaleyedtiscope

Tom Ardolino, who spent thirty years as the drummer for NRBQ, died this past January 6 at age fifty-six.

Ardolino was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, on January 12, 1955, and learned to drum by playing along to records. When he was fifteen, he saw NRBQ at a gig in Springfield, and afterward he began corresponding and trading tapes with group leader Terry Adams, subsequently becoming friends with the other band members as well. At the end of a show a couple of years later, the audience demanded an encore, but drummer Tom Staley had already left the stage, so bassist Joey Spampinato told Ardolino, who was in attendance, to play. Ardolino fit in so well that guitarist Al Anderson didn't realize it wasn't Staley until the song was over.

Staley left the group in 1974, and Ardolino was invited to join. "Terry found me at my job at Kmart—the only other job I've ever had—and asked if I wanted to join," Ardolino told *Modern Drummer* in 1984. "It just about knocked me over, but I knew all the songs."

With NRBQ, knowing all the songs was a tall order. Besides tunes recorded by the band, Adams was likely to call just about anything, whether it be rock 'n' roll, avant-garde jazz, blues, rockabilly, swing, polka, country, R&B, or folk. The biggest requirement for the group's drummer was the ability to adapt to any style at any moment.

Ardolino proved to be perfect in that regard, his relaxed demeanor behind a no-frills kit and under a mane of curls belying the solid but loose groove he was laying down. "It seems like hardly anyone really swings anymore," he told *MD*, "and I like my playing to be more feeling than technical."

Ardolino played with NRBQ from 1974 until the band went on hiatus in 2004, appearing on fifteen studio albums and typically playing 250 shows a year. For a while, Ardolino and Joey and Johnny Spampinato (the latter had replaced Anderson) toured under the name Baby Macaroni. During NRBQ's hiatus, Ardolino released a solo album, *Unknown Brain*. He also produced several compilations of song-poems, vinyl records on which amateur lyricists, for a fee, could have their words set to music and recorded by professionals. Ardolino did some recording with Bob Dylan, Brian Wilson, and John Sebastian as well.

When Adams sought to reassemble NRBQ, the Spampinato brothers decided to pursue another project. Adams made some other recordings on which Ardolino played, including a reunion with founding NRBQ guitarist Steve Ferguson called Louisville Sluggers. Adams then launched a new version of NRBQ, but Ardolino was suffering from bad health and was unable to tour. He did, however, play on two tracks of NRBQ's recent album, *Keep This Love Goin'*, and he created the cover art.

"We've been best friends since we met, years before he joined the band," Adams said when Ardolino died. "I guarantee that as we tour, we will have Tom's spirit with us."

Rick Mattingly

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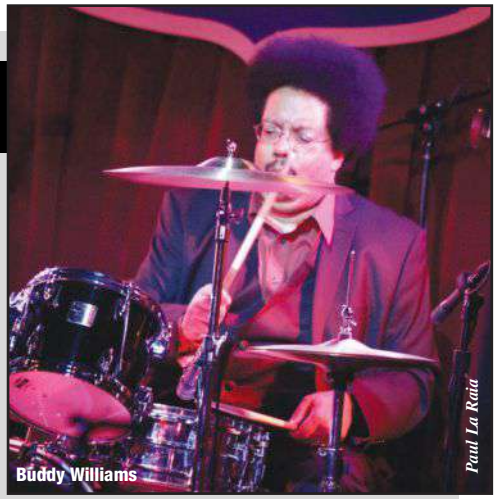
Buddy Williams

Paul La Raia

Think back to the opening guitar riff of Aretha Franklin's "Respect" or the soulful fretwork on Brook Benton's "Rainy Night in Georgia"—that's Cornell Dupree. The guitarist, who played on more than 2,500 recordings, with artists such as Paul Simon, Joe Cocker, Lou Rawls, Barbra Streisand, Lena Horne, Miles Davis, Wilson Pickett, Ringo Starr, Lou Donaldson, and Etta James, passed away on May 8, 2011, in his native Fort Worth, Texas, at age sixty-eight.

The writer and musician Josh Alan Friedman characterized Dupree as "the ultimate unshowoff." Indeed, Cornell, who was also a member of the original *Saturday Night Live* band, played the parts that fit, the parts that worked, and in many cases the "unshowoff" parts that glued the song together into a hit. In the liner notes to the guitarist's *Bop 'n' Blues* album, the famed Atlantic Records producer Jerry Wexler said, "When Mr. Dupree, the pride of Fort Worth, came to our rescue, it was bye-bye to multiple guitarists because—miraculously, it seemed to me—one man playing rhythm and lead at the same time took the place of three."

The concert in memory of the great Dupree, at New York City's B.B. King Blues Club & Grill this past February 7, was R&B drum heaven. Sitting in the drum chair at various times during the "School of Cornell," as the event was billed, were Steve Gadd, Bernard Purdie, Steve Jordan, Chris Parker, Steve Ferrone, Clint de Ganon, and Buddy Williams. Other performers included Steve Cropper, Danny Kortchmar, John Scofield, and Ray Parker Jr. on guitar; Eddie Gomez, Will Lee, Gordon Edwards, Willie Weeks, and Frank Canino on bass; Paul Shaffer and Leon Pendarvis on keyboards; Randy Brecker on trumpet; and Alex Foster, Ronnie Cuber, and Lenny Pickett on saxophone.

The evening included numerous highlights, and the grooves, from tight to laid-back, were incredible. Steve Jordan played a solo on a mini set of a bass drum, snare drum, ride cymbal, and pair of hi-hats. Clint de Ganon performed with the new Stuff, and Chris Parker played with the old Stuff. Steve Ferrone was on a mission to move the crowd—mission accomplished. Bernard Purdie slowly added the ingredients and got the pot boiling for "Memphis Soul Stew." Lenny Pickett played a very respectful rendering of King Curtis's classic sax tone and riffs on "Soul Twist." And on the "Way Back Home" finale, everybody got a chance to play, and everybody played tastefully—just as Cornell would have done.

As the guitarist once told a newspaper reporter, "I'm about a feeling…and playing the right thing at the right time." The feeling for Cornell was definitely there, and the time was right.

Jim Payne

Photo: Melanie Ross

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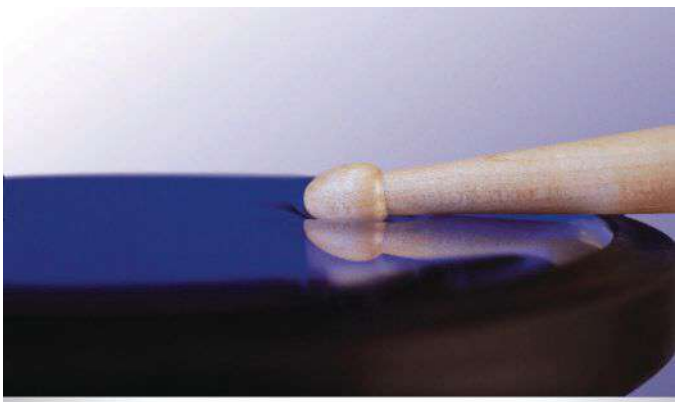

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KIT OF THE MONTH

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Our latest outfit, an oversize Yamaha Recording Custom kit, comes from Chicago's Kenny Bernardi. "This is not just a drumset," Bernardi says. "This is a diatonic and chromatic musical instrument."

The setup also features two Peter Erskine piccolo snare drums, along with LP cowbells, woodblocks, and John Dolmayan mini timbales. The cymbals are by Zildjian and Sabian, and the drumheads are by Remo and Aquarian. The Club Jordan cocktail kit includes a hi-hat with a drop clutch that, Bernardi explains, "I fabricated from my own custom chain-driven reverse foot pedal for the floor tom."

Indeed, the pedal setup is especially impressive. "One of my beaters hits a cowbell at the same time it hits my bass drum," Bernardi says. "The mini-tom beater hits a bass drum at the same time as well. I have seven beaters working and fifty-five or more toys to hit. And believe it or not, I've calculated for room to grow it even bigger and better."

Photo Submission: Hi-res digital photos, along with descriptive text, may be emailed to kitofthemonth@moderndrummer.com. Show "Kit of the Month" in the subject line of the message.

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